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THE SHORT STORY

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The Editor will be glad to consider stories offered for publication and will endeavour to return unsuitable manuscripts when they are accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. He will take no responsibility for the loss of manuscripts.

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The WHISPERING GALLERY of LIFE & LETTERS

(This section is devoted to Editorial Comments on current topics of interest)

The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible place
Shed influence. They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it.—

COLERIDGE

It is in the highest degree unphilosophic to call language or diction the dress of our thoughts . . . It is the incarnation of our thoughts.—

WORDSWORTH

T. E. Lawrence

ON May 19, died, as the result of a motor cycle crash, Colonel T. E. Lawrence, popularly known as "Lawrence of Arabia" or the mysterious "Aircraftman Shaw," 'a rare and splendid genius . . . soldier, philosopher, organiser, scholar, diplomatist, statesman, administrator, strategist, and above all a Leader.' He was laid to rest in a plot alongside the river Frome in the seventeenth century churchyard, at Moreton, Dorsetshire; among the mourners were Mr Winston Churchill, Lord Lloyd, Earl Winterton, Mr Siegfried Sassoon, the Poet, Mrs Thomas Hardy, Lady Astor, the Charge d' Affaires of the Iraq Legation and a group of old soldiers from different parts of the country who had served Lawrence in Arabia.

'Many books have been written about him (Mr A. G. Macdonell has said); many portraits of him painted; and more legends have gathered round his personality than round the figures of Cœur de Lion or Haroun of Bagdad.' But the real authoritative life of him has been wtitten by Captain B. H. Liddell Hart—*T.E. Lawrence in Arabia and After* which Jonathan Cape published in March 1934.

Thomas Edward Lawrence was born in Wales on August 15, 1888 of a Leicestershire family. He was educated at Oxford High School, and Jesus College, Oxford, where in 1910, he took a first class in modern history. The next year, he travelled through Syria on foot to study Crusading architecture. With the assistance of a post-graduate endowment at Magdalen College, Lawrence went, in 1911, on an expedition to Jerablus on the Euphrates and at Carchemish, he worked till 1914, making many explorations in Syria and Mesopotamia in native company and accepting for a few weeks an appointment under the Palestine Exploration Fund, which attached him to the survey of North Sinai carried out by Col Newcombe for the War Office in 1913-14.

On the outbreak of the Great War, Lawrence, being below standard height,

obtained only a post in the Geographical section of the War Office. When Turkey had joined the Central Powers, Lord Kitchener sent him to Egypt where Lawrence joined a rudimentary Military Intelligence Section. In the negotiations leading to an Arab revolt, Lawrence was a moving spirit and was responsible for organising the Arab Bureau which, in 1916, served as an intelligence office for the Arab campaigns. To bring about closer liaison between the British and the Arabs, he went to Jidda and soon won the confidence of Emir Faisal of Iraq. Lawrence induced Faisal to reorganise his army and move north so as to threaten the communications of Medina by attacking Hejaz Railway. With the Emir established at Wejh, Lawrence rode off into the interior to raise the northern tribes against the Turks. He pushed beyond the enemy lines in Syria and on his return he picked up a Huweitat force under the famous raider, Auda Abu Tayyi and routed a Turkish battalion near Ma'an and forced a passage to Aqaba which was occupied for Faisal in August 1917. For this exploit, Lawrence was promoted to field rank and given British and French decorations, which, however, he did not accept. Helped by General Allenby, Lawrence prompted the forward moves of Faisal's force. In the battle of Wadi el-Hesa, near Esh Shobek, he inflicted a heavy defeat on the enemy. Lawrence in particular turned his attention to train-wrecking and met with such success that Medina became virtually isolated. Early in 1918, he made a futile attempt to cut the Turkish Palestine army's railway communication, but sometime later in summer, he, with the help of Allenby and Faisal's forces, succeeded in breaking up the enemy's trans-Jordan army and entered Damascus. Lawrence took charge of the city till Allenby could reach it and suppressed attempts at reaction.

In the Peace Conference of 1919, Lawrence played a prominent part. Soon he retired and undertook to write the narrative of his adventures. The first manuscript of his work was lost but he began again and announced that the book would be issued in 1926 under the title of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom.* In 1919, Lawrence was elected a Research Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, where he resided for a year. Called by Mr Winston Churchill, he worked in the Colonial Office in 1921 as adviser on Arab affairs in which capacity he was mostly responsible for making Faisal King of Iraq. But disgusted with the failure of Allies towards Arabs, he in 1922 left Government service and abjured all official rank and decorations. Soon he joined the Royal Air Force as a mechanic but in 1923 unwelcome publicity drove him to hide in the Tank Corps and in 1925, he was re-transferred to the Royal Air Force still as a mechanic. Eventually in India, he served on the North Western Frontier but he was called to England in April, 1928.

[*Encyclopædia Britannica*]

'Lawrence's life,' in the words of Mr W. H. Auden, 'is an allegory of the transformation of the Truly Weak Man into the Truly Strong Man, an answer to the question, 'How shall the self-conscious man be saved?' and the moral seems to be this: 'Self-consciousness is an asset, in fact the only friend of our progress. We can't go back on it. But its demands on our little person and his appetites are so great that most of us, terrified, try to escape or make terms with it, which is fatal. As a pursuer it is deadly.' Only the continuous annihilation of the self by the Identity, to use Blake's terminology, will bring to us to the freedom we wish for, or in Lawrence's own phrase "Happinesss comes in absorption."'

Lawrence was a remarkable bookman and Robert Graves writes that he read every book in the Library of the Oxford Union—the best part of 50,000 volumes—in six years! This is an average of over twenty a day. 'For three years he read day and night on a hearthrug, which was a mattress so that he could fall asleep as he read. Often he spent eighteen hours a day reading, and at last got so good at it that he could tear

the heart out of the most formidable book in half an hour.' His memory was a miracle and he alone in all England guessed the identity of the author (Private 19022) of *Her Privates We*, writing to the publisher Mr Peter Davies that he had read *Scenes and Portraits* fifty times and was convinced that the author of the two books 'was one and the same—' a remarkable piece of penetration when it is remembered that an interval of twenty years separated the two books.' Private 19022 was the late Mr Frederic Manning.

Both History and Literature are glorified by the name of Lawrence; 'his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*,' the *Times* says, 'will live as long as the fame of this young adventurer of body and spirit, who tasted and wielded power only to despise its pomps and vanities.'

Galsworthy Memorials

A MEMORIAL tablet to John Galsworthy has been unveiled in the cloisters at New College, Oxford, by Mr John Masefield. In unveiling the tablet the Poet-Laureate spoke of Galsworthy's generosity and tenderness of character. Mrs Galsworthy has endowed a scholarship for the furtherance of the study of English literature—the first of its kind in Oxford—in memory of her husband; in announcing its foundation the Warden of the New College, Mr H.A.L. Fisher, said that it was altogether right and fitting that the scholarship was to be connected with the name of 'the greatest master of imaginative literature, who has been educated within these walls.' Professor Gilbert Murray, in paying his tribute, said that 'Galsworthy was an extraordinary conscientious artist, and considering the mass of his work, it was remarkable for the high level he maintained. Great Victorians, like Dickens and Thackeray, sometimes repelled a modern by their fault of allowing their high spirits to carry them away, but he doubted whether Galsworthy would repel future generations, because he was such a vigilant self-critic.' A very correct remark; one who reads his later works will never fail to see the high sense of self-criticism Galsworthy had developed; the economy of words, the quiet beauty, now warm, now marmoreal, of his thoughts.

Mr John Masefield

POET-LAUREATE Mr John Masefield has been awarded the Order of Merit in the King's Birthday and Jubilee Honours. He has written for the Jubilee Souvenir official programe "A Prayer for the King's Majesty":—

O God, whose mercy is our state,
Whose realms are children in Thy hand
Who willed that, in the years of Fate,
Thy servant George should rule the land

We thank thee that the years of strife
Have changed to peace, and for this thing
That Thou has given him length of life
Under thy hand to be our King.

O God, vouchsafe him many years
With all the world as England's friend
And England bright among her peers
With wisdom that can never end.

A poem in the true Masefieldian vein.

G. K. C.

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON reports that he has started a new series of short stories under the general title *The Paradoxes of Mr Pond*. (From *Books Abroad: An International Quarterly*) We hope that the paradoxes of Mr Pond will be as teasing as the scandal of Father Brown was amazing.

An Orientalist Honoured

SIR DENISON ROSS, Director of the School of Oriental studies, London Institution, and Professor of Persian Literature in the University of London, has been awarded the Triennial Gold Medal of the Royal Asiatic Society at the Society's annual meeting in London.

Madame Sophia Wadia

IN the April issue of the SHORT STORY we had occasion to refer to Madame Sophia Wadia, Indian delegate to the International Congress

of the P. E. N. Clubs to be held in Barcelona, Spain. Madame Sophia Wadia has forwarded the following resolution to be moved at the Congress which has been approved of by Dr Tagore, the President of the P. E. N. in India :—

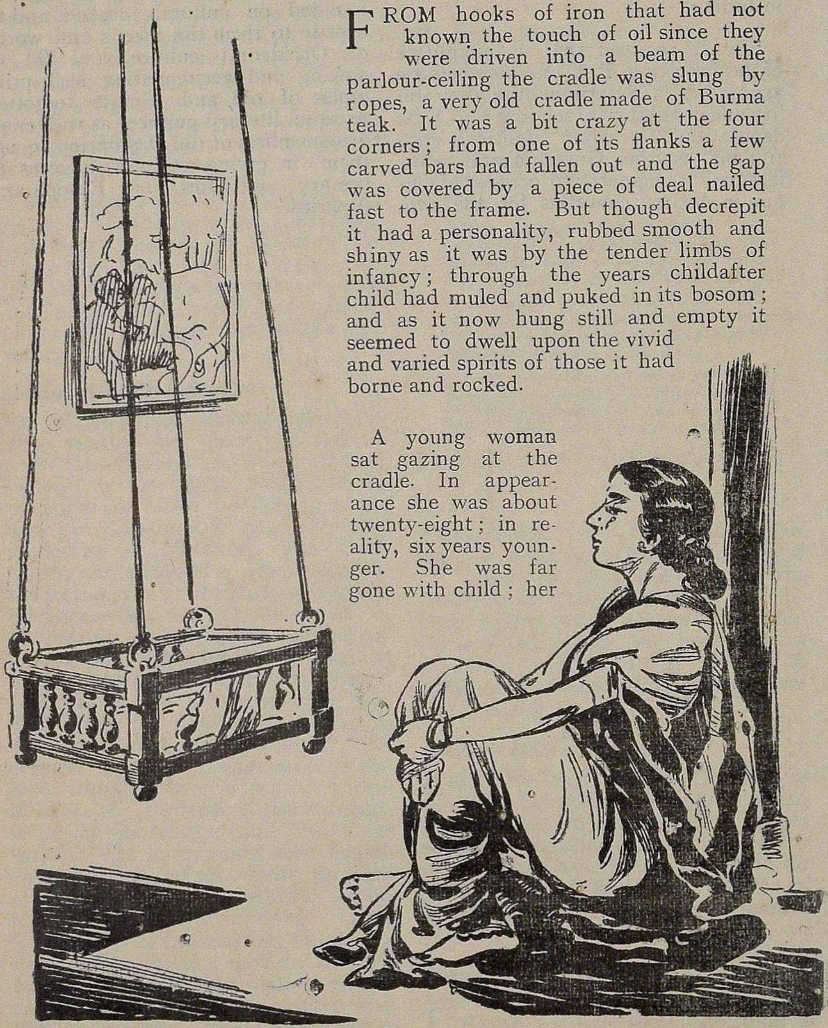
'Be it resolved that a Committee of the following P. E. N. members be appointed to determine the desirability and feasibility of sending a P.E.N. deputation, free from political aims and bias as from Governmental interference or support, to centres of culture in Asiatic countries for the two-fold purpose, (*a*) of bringing fraternal greetings from Western P. E. N. members to their Asiatic confreres and, with the co-operation of the latter, of labouring actively to spread among the people of Asia the message of goodwill founded on cultural idealism and to explain to them the merits and worth of Occidental culture, and (*b*) of seeking and accumulating such principles of old and almost forgotten Asiastic literary cultures as will energize members of the Deputation to use them in giving a fresh impetus to literary activities in Europe and America.'

THE CRADLE

By *RACONTEUR*

FROM hooks of iron that had not known the touch of oil since they were driven into a beam of the parlour-ceiling the cradle was slung by ropes, a very old cradle made of Burma teak. It was a bit crazy at the four corners; from one of its flanks a few carved bars had fallen out and the gap was covered by a piece of deal nailed fast to the frame. But though decrepit it had a personality, rubbed smooth and shiny as it was by the tender limbs of infancy; through the years childafter child had muled and puked in its bosom; and as it now hung still and empty it seemed to dwell upon the vivid and varied spirits of those it had borne and rocked.

A young woman sat gazing at the cradle. In appearance she was about twenty-eight; in reality, six years younger. She was far gone with child; her



'Her eyes were full of a deep indignation.'

eyes which were fixed on the cradle were not expressive of the delicious languor of her state; they were full of a deep indignation. Presently she transferred her look to a picture on the wall; indignation died and the eyes had back again their dark and natural loveliness. It was a Ravi Varma picture—Yasoda milking the cow and baby Krishna, plump, bejewelled, and smiling, leaning on her back, his arms round her neck.

A dream became audible at once. The picture shed manna on her memory and she returned to the beatitude of a certain day in her sixteenth year. She had felt giddy and vomitted and complained of a sick headache to her husband's aunt, a kindly woman, who, having no daughters of her own and bored with the monotony of seeing boys' dresses—she had four sons—lavished all her love upon her.

'It's no sick headache, my dear,' she had said.

'What's it then?' Kalyani had insisted on knowing the cause of the nausea.

For answer, gently taking her by the arm the aunt had led her to the picture, touched the figure of Krishna telling how divinely beautiful he was, and whispered something in her ear. Kalyani had blushed like a rose on hearing the words and the aunt saying 'It is going to be a boy and he will be as beautiful as the Great Lover,' had smiled intimately into her shyly smiling eyes. And the days, the months following had built an enchanted world of blossoms and birdsong; she had been in a passion of tenderness for everybody; had felt a desire to eat sweet things and listen to sweet talk, and it did one's heart good to see her then, as the neighbouring girls said.

And before the baby came she had bought the cradle from a widow for two rupees and eight annas—she could not afford to have a new one—; the offer had come in quite handy. This was six years ago though her mind measured the span as yesterday; the boy was succeeded by two little sisters but none of them were now alive. Whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever, and an array of other infantile ailments lay in ambush.

The cradle hung empty.

From the picture Kalyani looked back at it and her eyes flashed white. It seemed to mock the childless emptiness of her days, hanging there so mutely, callously; out of its sleepy hollow leaped the lovely eidolons of her dead young ones and she saw them—ah, happy sight! with the beaded bubbles of milk winking on their rosy lips, kicking their rosy feet, stretching their rosy hands; heard them crowing, croodling, ululating. Her eyes became misted, the scene dissolving musically away into the dim arches of the years; the next instant they flashed white again, for the news she had heard that morning rang wildly like a wild bell in her ears.

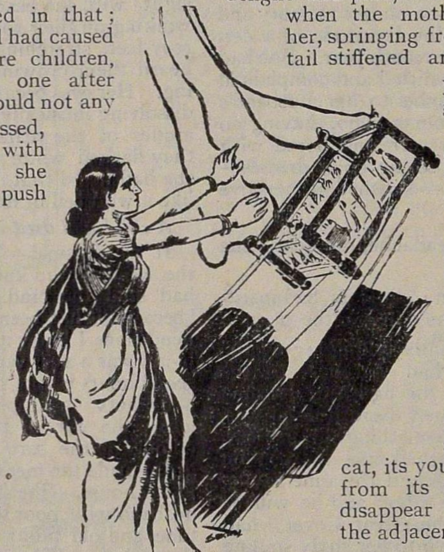
A child had died in that cradle!

It was dismal. 'I am telling you,' the woman who knew the widow who had sold the cradle to her had said, 'because it has been a sore load on my mind since I knew it. Seshi's daughter-in-law was a very vain girl. She used to spend hours before the mirror admiring her beauty; set up the fashion in the wear, the cut of the blouse and the colour of the sari, among a circle of girls; made the meekest of them to rebel in her house. She had a way with her husband who, poor fellow, danced to her tune, and old Seshi was entirely out of the picture. When she gave birth to her first child she did not find any great pleasure in maternity; the little thing was a nuisance, she told her friends. She did not suckle the baby; she feared her firm young breasts would lose their shapeliness if she suckled. Slipping and sliding like gourds while you are still a girl—we could read her thought. The baby drew its milk from the bottle and when it cried, not out of hunger but out of peevishness, she put it in the cradle, inserted a rubber nipple with a silver disc-guard into its mouth, and sat dreaming about new fashions in dress and jewellery. Well, one day the child swallowed the nipple, silver disc and all, choked, and died. It was healthy and

we wondered what had brought about its sudden death. . . and then, Seshi told me; while the others talked angrily of diarrhœa. Her daughter-in-law grew strangely silent after the unfortunate happening; the cradle was sold to you when her son got himself transferred to the moffussil office. With a guilty conscience his wife could not stay in the city.'

The cradle hung empty.

A child had died in that; it was accursed and had caused the death of more children, her darling ones, one after another. But it would not any more, Kalyani hissed, her face sizzling with anger. Rising up she gave it a violent push and it struck with a bang and a rattle against the wall. She stood panting and in the rebound the cradle hit her savagely at the knees; it spun and squealed sinisterly, then frowned with all the blackness of a Burman forest from where its timber had been cut.



'It struck with a bang and a rattle against the wall.'

Kalyani could not bear the sight of it, the glittering leer of its bars, the crazy creak of its joints. And with the help of the servantmaid she untied the knots of ropes and threw it into the dark of the lumber room.

A year after, on a certain day, when she had a new wicker-cradle and was rocking her baby weaving the while a garland of lullaby, Kalyani was called by the maidservant to the backyard of the house. The maid had entered the lumber room for a handful of ashes to scour the vessels and had looked into the cradle, for it was in her mind for long, as her mistress had no use of it, to ask her if she would let her have it; she was expecting the confinement of her daughter shortly.

'Look,' she said pointing to the cradle, genuinely astonished, and Kalyani saw inside a pair of kittens, white as driven snow. Their eyes were not fully opened to the light of the world; uttering a little moan, so musical with delight and pain, she lifted them out when the mother-cat surprised her, springing from the roof, with tail stiffened and eyes looming yellow in the gloom.

'Why did you disturb the poor things?' the maid asked.

'Because I did not want them to die,' replied Kalyani in a tone of sudden anguish.

'Why should they die?'

She did not answer. And she saw the mother-cat, its young ones dangling from its mouth, pass and disappear over the roof of the adjacent house.

'It won't come again,' she wispered to herself, 'and if it does . . .' Breaking off abruptly she dragged out the cradle which was thick with dust and dirt and muffled half with sticky spider-web. She then leaned it against the wall and while she was withdrawing her hands, it toppled down and the stem of one of its iron hooks projecting caught the flowing end of her sari and tore it with a purr. The cradle smarted under the touch of her who had humiliated and cast it away where air and light and infant limbs were not, and its derelict heart blazed fiercely; its rusty fang thrust out to furrow her flesh.

Seeing the look of loathing on her mistress's face the servant said: 'Why not you give the cradle to me if you have no use of it? I've been asking you these many months.'

There was no answer again.

Next morning the servantmaid entered the backyard of the house. The first thing her eye sought for was the cradle and the first thing her eye missed was the cradle. She stood there scanning every nook and shadow when her mistress came to her.

'What are you looking for?'

'Where is it?'

'The cradle?'

'Yes.'

'There!'

The servantmaid turned her eye in the direction of her mistress's pointing finger and her look alighted upon a heap of charred wood and ashes.

'I wanted it for my grandchild?' she said, her voice tinged with ache and reproach.

'I wanted your grandchild to live like this chubby child of mine.'

'I don't understand.'

'Well, take this money and buy a new cradle for your coming grandchild. I cremated this cradle, ere it tried to cremate more children. I bought it of a widow; it was the grave of a child to whom its mother refused her milk, lest she should lose her beatuy; it has been the grave of three of my children.' And in the hands of the embarrassed maid the lady placed the silver she had saved for some months.

To travel is to discover that everybody is wrong. The philosophies, the civilisations which seem, at a distance, so superior to those current at home, all prove on a close inspection to be in their own way just as hopelessly imperfect. That knowledge, which only travel can give, is worth, it seems to me, all the trouble, all the discomfort and expense of a circumnavigation.—

ALDOUS HUXLEY
(*Jesting Pilate*)

Jr BLAST & Sr BLAST

SENIOR BLAST and Junior Blast, father and son, lived in a grotto high up among the crags of the ghats. The grotto was one of the prettiest things you ever saw. Deep in the heart of the mountains it lay, decorated with clinging creepers and flowering plants. Sweet-smelling flowers bloomed there at all times of the year and on darkest nights the cave was light, with the many rare and beautiful gems that were set on its walls. And to crown all there was near by a beautiful cascade of crystal water which settled down into a limpid pool at the foot of the grotto before it rushed with a mighty roar, into the depths of a black ravine. Huge birds used to roost upon the roof of their residence and occasionally small bright-plumed birds would come and perch upon the leafy doorways of their home, seeking the red ripe fruits which hung in clusters. On bright summer evenings the setting sun would send forth his golden darts across the blue waters of the sea and light up their grotto in a great tide of colours.

Within a whistle's call lived their servants, Thunder, Lightning, and Rain.

Blast Senior was a great sleeper and slept inside the grotto day and night and issued forth only on rare occasions. And Master Blast, called the Junior, never remained inside. He would always be flying about and playing pranks; but all the same he was generally liked. The flowers on the mountain-side would ask him for a kiss in return for their fragrance and very often he would agree and give them gentle kisses.

One bright summer's day in May, Blast Junior issued forth into the world, dressed up in all his finery. He had on his bright red clothes and his beautiful turban with the ostrich quill. He put

'But don't try, please, you cannot put out the lights,' said Haram.

'Bother the fairies,' replied Blast Junior, who did not like fairies. 'Come, give me some scent. I am having a day out.' So they gave him some. He saw some late night-birds feeding and he called out, 'You dirty ill-omened birds, you are still at it, eh? I'll teach you to respect my crags. Away with you', and he blew at them from behind.

'You little imp of mischief,' shrilled back the birds, 'you are not the master here, and we have much finer places to feed from too. Come, take these dirty quills we have wanted to cast away ever so long to stick on your cap.' They left some quills behind them which in disgust Junior Blast blew into the ravine.

— By —
K. M. KAPPANA

on his flying wings and took his golden blowpipe. When he started forth the sun was scarcely up in the east and the whole house was quiet. He found the flowers all sleeping and blew on them so suddenly that they awoke in a terrible fright. 'Shame on you, Master Blast,' cried they with coy displeasure, 'to give us such a fright. We are playing with fairies and such nice games too. You have spoilt it all.'

Then he tried his strength against the huge giants of the forest who only shook their heads and mocked at him saying, 'This isn't good for you, Master Blast. Surely you are going to get into trouble ere long.' Without making any reply to this evil prediction, he flew over their heads and across the deep caverns and over many peaks into the extensive plains beyond. 'Whither away so fast, oh Master Blast?' called out an old banyan tree, who was a friend of his father and who was old when his father was young.

'Off to the Laccadives across the blue Arabian Sea where the coral reefs grow,' young Blast whistled back. He flew over fields, over hills, over the heads of many trees till he reached the sea.

On the sea-beach he saw some children playing and he could not resist the temptation of playing a trick on them. He went into their midst and blew some sand into their eyes. The children set up a fine roar, which brought down their mothers, but before they could reach the place, Master Blast flapped his wings and flew for life. He just skimmed over the waters and watched the many beautiful fishes which played deep down in the luminous depths; danced with the sails of the many fishing boats which lay scattered in the sea.

Master Blast flew due west and came upon an island. It had a sort of promontory and on the promontory stood a small pretty cottage. The cottage was surrounded by a luxuriant garden full of the most sweet-smelling flowers. In front of the cottage stood a tall post with a cross-beam at the top. The garden was surrounded by huge pieces of granite and the waves lashed foamily on these rocks.

On one of the rocks sat a small girl with golden hair and very black eyes. She was gazing far out into the open sea. She had in her lap a big bouquet of flowers which sent forth a wonderful fragrance all around. Master Blast sat upon the roof and watched the whole place. From his perch he could see as far as the distant horizon; and like a small white dot he saw a something which he soon understood to be the sail of a fast approaching boat. 'That is a fine bouquet the girl has,' muttered he to himself. 'Ah, I see she is going to wear it in her hair. I won't let you do it, vain girl?'

So he went slyly behind her back and blew upon her hair with all his might. The hair flew in all directions and into her eyes. Just at the moment Master Blast blew the bouquet of flowers into the sea. When her hair was arranged and tied into a knot she looked for the flowers about her and saw it floating on the waves beyond her reach.

The poor girl felt so sad that she began to cry, and the waves feeling pity for her threw her flowers back on to the land saying, 'Come, Haram dear, don't cry, we have tossed it back for you. And look you, there is Master Blast behind you yet, and it is he that did the mischief.' She picked them up but they were all spoilt with sea-water and on turning round, saw Master Blast standing there grinning; and she called Master Blast a nasty, mischievous breeze.

'I am a nasty breeze, am I, little girl? I will show you and the sea what I can do.' Master Blast got very furious and was planning some fresh mischief. The sun was sinking in the west and the girl had gone inside. Master Blast wanted to punish the sea for giving back the bouquet and blew at the sea. But the sea only broke into a laughter which made him still more angry.

Presently the sun had set and the girl had brought out three lanterns from inside the cottage. She lighted them and hung them up on the horizontal beam on the post in the garden. In this Master Blast found an excellent opportunity for his revenge. 'Ha, ha, here is one for me. I will put out every light she lights and make her father and people grope their way here. The vain hussy!' And he quietly bided his time. The three lights glimmered like stars and they could be seen at a very great distance from the open sea. The three lights went by the name of Haram's stars among the seafaring folk; for it was by these lights that the boats were steered off the sunken rocks that were near the island. Now Master Blast knew that in the boat that was coming towards the island, was her father and that without the help of these lights it would be difficult to steer the boat away from the treacherous rocks. So he flew up at the lights and began to blow at them with all his might. He expected to see them all extinguished but lo, the lights burned steadily. He blew again and again and yet again; but all his efforts were of no

avail. He bluged out his cheeks and blew at them with all his strength, but still the lights were there. Poor Master Blast did not know they were Dietz lanterns specially made to defeat him. So he went all around them again and blew at them from all directions but still the lights stood burning. Haram, the little girl, was watching the efforts of Master Blast from the garden. And when she found him blowing and blowing with his eyes like two huge circles and his cheeks bulged out like Christmas balloons she broke out into a peal of laughter and cried, 'Master Blast, Master Blast, mind you, you may burst; you are bulging out too much!' Which made Master Blast angrier with shame and indignation.

He went to each lantern turn by turn. The lanterns tossed this side and that and even the cold Master Blast began to perspire. His fine robes were all spoiled. The ostrich feather was broken and hanging loose and when he knew that he was really disgraced, and that by a small girl, he began to tear out his hair and blubber like a child. He sent out three piteous howls which were heard by his father far away in the grotto in the ghats.

Senior Blast at once rose up, and hurriedly putting on his robes flew with a fearful noise in a second's time to his son, whom he found in a ridiculous pickle. 'By Thunder! What is the matter?' growled Senior Blast. 'Tell me quick.'

'That small chit of a girl abused me and laughed at my cheeks,' whined Junior Blast, 'and when I attempted to blow those lights out, they simply wouldn't go. Oh father, they are magic specially meant to insult us.'

'Magic indeed! let me see the magic that fools *me*. Little girl, know that I am Senior Blast. I am the master of Thunder, Lightning, and Rain. I can smash this rocky island into a thousand pieces. I can sink that boat and all the persons in it in a minute's time; well, I can.'

'But, oh Senior Blast,' cried the girl, 'he has not told you what mischief he has played against me. Oh, please don't sink the boat. I have nobody but my father.'

'Now, that is right,' said Senior Blast to the girl. 'Now say which of the lights do you want to put out,' he asked, turning to his son.

'But don't try, please, you cannot put them out,' said Haram.

'Can't put out, eh? Let me see the light I can't put out!' He took his major blowpipe and went straight at the biggest light which was a Dietz senior and gave it such a strong blast that the lantern rattled on the beam and enjoyed a merry-go-round. But the light was there. Senior Blast blew and blew till he bulged out and turned into a fearful figure. His eyes looked like two huge dark wells and his cheeks like two huge flying balloons. He tried and tried but the lights didn't care a straw. Master Blast seeing his father in this sorry state could not control himself and he too burst into a sudden fit of laughter. 'Ah father, you look a figure indeed! Oh, I will split my sides,' roared out Junior Blast.

'Stop that laughter, there,' thundered Senior Blast to his son. 'And you little chit,' turning to the girl, 'know that I am determined to sink that boat and this island too into the bargain If you don't want to die you may go and take refuge elsewhere.' Senior Blast stopped all his antics and then and there sent out his whistles across the seas to summon his servants. He meant business this time. He wanted to sink the boat and smite it to pieces; and he wanted to sink the island too.

Thunder, Lightning, and Rain, the three bondslaves of Senior Blast were sleeping comfortably in their quarters when this urgent summons reached them. Lightning who was only a light sleeper woke up. He put his head up above the mountains and winked his signal back and then woke up Thunder who groaned in his bed. 'Who wakes me up now?' demanded Thunder 'Why, our master of course,' replied Lightning. 'Then our master is an

ass,' said Thunder; 'who would think of thundering in May?' Lightning then sent word to Mistress Rain to come at once with all her clouds. 'But I haven't collected half the water yet,' she demurred. 'Never mind all that, we are wanted very urgently in the Laccadives.' So they all went in a body and received their orders.

In a minute's time the moon disappeared behind a bank of clouds; Lightning flashed and Thunder bellowed and rumbled. Blasts Senior and Junior sent forth such strong gusts at the sea that the waves began to rise mountains high.

Poor Haram was terribly frightened, for she knew that a great storm was brewing and that her father and many others were in danger of their lives. Feeling absolutely helpless and fearing that Senior Blast would carry out his threat she went inside her cottage, fell on her knees, and prayed aloud to God with tears flowing down her cheeks, to save her father from death. Just then an awful noise was heard, as of something flying across the skies. Some said it was a sword of fire, some said it was a human shape, but no one could say exactly what it was that flew.

Senior Blast, with his hair all dishevelled and with angry eyes, was issuing orders to his minions when this happened. When he heard the sound he stood rooted to the spot. He too saw the big fire flashing across the inky blackness of the skies and disappearing in the east. Presently he began to hear a terrible din from beyond the seas. He saw the clouds which had spread across the skies like a black pall, being drawn back with a sudden jerk. Thunder who had been bellowing and roaring a moment ago was now heard to groan as if in pain. Lightning was no where to be seen.

He flew back to his own abode to see what was the matter. What he saw there made his heart stop dead. His grotto once so beautiful and splendid was no more. It was a mass of ruins. Rocks lay all around broken into a million fragments. The cascade had disappeared and the pool which contained the crystal water had completely dried up. The creepers and the flowering plants around lay scorched and blistered, and from the depths of the dark ravines below were heard sounds of lamentation and despair. Senior Blast stretched out his neck over the precipice and looked below; and there at the foot he saw his faithful subordinates lying enchained to rocks. Thunder was lying on the ground and growling. His shaggy hair which had fallen over his eyes and matted beard were all clotted with blood. Lightning was silent and sulking in a corner; while Mistress Rain was profusely shedding tears with her face covered with her hands. Fragments of clouds of various colours lay scattered around her.

Just then an iron hand caught him by the neck from behind and he felt himself being pushed into a dark leather ball, with a voice saying, 'I'll blast you, Master Mischief.' In a minute he was a prisoner but he had his beloved son also to keep company. 'Who is it, father, that has put you in,' inquired Junior Blast, 'and who is stronger than you?' 'Be quiet, don't speak,' chided Senior Blast. 'It is the Avenger.' The son received the father with tears in his eyes and both together bemoaned their fate. Suddenly they felt themselves going up into the skies and a moment later coming down with terrific speed and dashing against the ground. Now it was the head of Master Blast that struck against the rock and now it was Senior Blast's ponderous belly. Their bodies ached with pain. So they began to cry out from inside to let them loose. 'O master, master, please let us out,' cried they together. 'Our bodies ache so, and my poor son's head is bleeding,' added Senior Blast. At last the leather bag was opened and they were allowed to come out. 'Now what about your sinking the boat and that island, Senior Blast?' asked the Avenger. 'Master, it was a mistake, a grievous error for which we beg your pardon humbly,' explained Senior Blast. 'Not my pardon,

not my pardon, ask that girl's pardon on bended knees and let me see you doing it with my own eyes,' ordered the Avenger.

'We shall do so.' And when Senior Blast was about to do so, Haram said, 'No, no, Senior Blast. I am quite satisfied; my father is come home and I am thankful to all.

'So be it,' said the Avenger.

'But take warning, Senior Blast, know all children are my master's own. And they shall come to no harm, not even at the hands of the elements.' 'We promise not to do anything to injure a child,' swore the father and son. And they all parted, the most excellent of friends.

ON the seashore of endless worlds children meet. The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

* * * *

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

* * * *

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships get wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.—

TAGORE
(*Gitanjali*)

'Then the movement be blowed,' roared Marimuthu, 'and Gandhi—no, he is a great man.'

THE COBBLER'S CRIME

By T. J. RANGANATHAN

It was in the Central Jail, Trichinopoly, that I picked up his acquaintance. I am an ex-convict and I do not know whether a convict's impression of another convict can be any other than a normal man's view of a normal man. For, my own experience and experiments with truth have shown me that in the axiomatic, two negatives which make an affirmative, there obtains some such law as can have a universal application. Thus, I am confident of my normalness when I venture upon recording something of a fellow

criminal who looked very like a man at that time. Of course, I do not know whether he does look so now, when he might have been set free.

My crime was that I knowingly and wilfully broke a law of His Majesty's Government, 'misguided' by that half-naked fakir known as Mahatma Gandhi. The thing which made Marimuthu a prisoner, properly convicted and securely confined was, that he, without knowing what he was about in a realm where forensic frenzy has much to do, tested the strength of cohesion on the shin of somebody for some reason psychologically intelligible but juridically untenable. That there were such things as laws forged by great logical brains and approved by very high personages, lying in wait for every man, it is inconceivable he could ever have known. As for the business of breaking the shin in question, he decidely meant it and actually accomplished it without a mincing of matters. But, as soon as the shin he aimed at was broken, the very sacred thing of a law caught hold of him.

I first met Marimuthu the day I was taken in from the Quarantine. That day it was given to him to save a patriot (meaning me) from a humiliation, not worth mentioning here. The conversation which followed that incident brought him nearer to me. Casually he informed me that he was a cobbler and untouchouble This made me all the more attached to him.

Within a few days, Marimuthu became a faithful *chela* of mine, and this earned for me the respect of the whole jail. Moreover, his company and his voluntary services to me made life in jail bearable and even comfortable. At first I abhorred the idea of using contraband things. But, in course of time, I had to yield to the affectionate persuasions of Marimuthu and the aesthetic inclinations of my own tongue.

'Master, don't you have a wife, home, and all that?' was the curious question suddenly put to me one day by Marimuthu.

I could not help smiling.

'If I had no wife and no home my life here would be no sacrifice at all. Don't you see?'

'Then, would they not suffer through your absence?'

'They would.'

'But, Master, we shouldn't think of our home now. It would be unmanly and silly to do so. Wouldn't it be?'

'Silly, of course.'

He kept quiet for a while, and then suddenly brightening up, whispered in my ears: 'I am going to bring you a co-coanut-to-day. I have pitched upon a fellow to do the thing.'

'What shall I do with a co-coanut?'

'Anything,' was his crisp reply; and he scampered off before I could think of any further question.

Half an hour passed by, and he came back, not with a co-coanut but with a handful of onions.

Giving them to me, he muttered, 'The fool! He made a mess of it all—you mustn't trust the idiot of a warder, Master. The very fellow who was in the habit of conniving at these things has betrayed us. I don't know whether my name also will be dragged into the affair. If the fellow bungles before the Superintendent, I am blowed.'

'What will they do to you?'

'They won't take me out, and I want to go out to-day.'

Marimuthu was a short-term prisoner and generally short-term prisoners are not taken out for extramural work. But the Superintendent was so pleased with him that in Marimuthu's case an exemption was allowed. Extramural work means not a little to prisoners. If you are poetically inclined, it means another day's glance at the wide vast world with all its sounds and scenes; if, on the other hand, your mind is bent upon behaving in a matter-of-fact manner, it means so much of tobacco, snuff, beedies and what not, arriving

in a mysterious way. I was aware of it all; yet I asked him: 'But why are you very particular about going out? There are only fifteen days more for your release, and is it not a good thing to have as much of this jail inside it as you can these fifteen days?'

'Fifteen days!' he muttered with a jerk of his head, and added in a bitter drawl: 'Fifteen days is nothing, and I don't mind it.' Then his voice rose: 'But, Master, I feel like telling you something of my story to-day. Shall I?'

'Go on,' I nodded.

'I am not a vain fellow, as you know well, Master . . . but my wife is a very pretty girl,' he began clumsily. 'You should have a look at her one of these days.'

Maybe she was a pretty girl. As every silly husband has got an affectionate wife, so every jealous husband posseses a pretty wife whom somebody is always on the look-out to lead astray.

'But, where is your story?' I asked impatiently.

'Hm! I am coming to that,' he paused awhile, and after humming and hawing a little, continued: 'She is a pretty girl, as I told you just now. She loves me. She helps me. Cobbling is not a joke, Master. It requires strong teeth and callous fingers. She helps me a lot, and nobody knows it. She is not an ordinary girl, I tell you. She comes from town. She knows reading and writing. She is a very intelligent girl.'

He paused again.

'I will tell you the story another time, Master,' he ended abruptly, and went away without giving me time to make any remark.

But as I was wondering what all this strange behaviour of his meant, he reappeared inside of a few minutes and in an anxious tone asked me: 'Master, are you angry with me?'

I laughed and made no reply.

'I will tell you the story,' he commenced; 'after all it is not a long one.'

'Then why this beating about the bush?'

His face became very serious. 'Yesternight I dreamt a very bad dream,' he said. 'Hm! I am here and she is there. You are here, Master, because you wanted Swaraj for our country. I am here because I wanted to fulfil the wishes of a girl. Yet the girl is weeping there. It is absurd—the whole business, I mean. I don't know what they gain by this. By keeping me away from her, they can't make a foolish fellow's shin turn all right. . . .'

He did not finish. His eyes brimmed with tears, and his lips quivered like the strings of a well-tuned violin when bowed by an expert hand.

'Don't be silly,' I said in a soothing tone. 'It won't lead you anywhere to think and talk like this. Fifteen days more, and you are off to be by the side of that loving girl. Leave these queer thoughts aside and be a man.'

My words were of no avail. He burst into a violent fit of weeping and departed without telling me the story even then.

That day he did not pay me his usual evening visit before the lock-up. When the warder made his appearance, evidently intent upon effecting the daily nocturnal safe-keeping of my person, I entered my cell, and, while he slammed the door with a mechanical swiftness, I wondered whether my well-intentioned words could have had anything to do with Marimuthu's failure to turn up that evening.

The automaton of a warder locked my door, and clinking the bunch of keys, passed on to the next. It was time for me to go to bed.

Just at the moment when I unrolled the coarse flaxen sheet to strech myself on, I heard somebody rapping on the iron bars of my door in so wild a manner that I thought it was an illusion born of my strange musings about Marimuthu's unusual behaviour. But the rap persistently continued, and I looked up to find Marimuthu himself

dressed from foot to crown in a white uniform, like a convict warder.

He signed not to speak aloud; he shed a few drops of tears. ' I am come to take leave of you. Don't forget me. Keep this, he whispered, and something flew from his hand and fell into my cell; the next instant the robust figure of Marimuthu had disappeared. I was stunned.

Half an hour passed. All of a sudden the whole staff of the jail became very busy, and I heard and saw the restless movements of men outside my cell and a chatter among the dwellers of cells like mine. The counting of prisoners took place many a time and various methods such as queuing, marching in and out, were adopted. It took them three hours to discover somebody was missing, an hour more to find out who that somebody was, and a further half to make sure that their conclusions were accurate.

In the very beginning I conjectured aright what the whole business was about and who that missing somebody was. Who else could it be but my own Marimuthu? But I was careful enough to dissemble like one innocent of any knowledge of it for obvious reasons.

Yes; he had escaped and the authorities commenced anew the adventurous task of recapturing the 'dangerous criminal'—which name was bestowed upon him in justification of the precautionary methods the jail officials had been adopting, making it impossible for any prisoner of ordinary talents to get out of their hands.

Next morning I looked for the thing thrown by Marimuthu into my cell prior to his departure. It was no other than a beautiful, many-coloured, hand-woven purse. I opened it and found a small bit of paper inside. Something was scribbled in pencil by an illegible hand on that bit of paper. With some difficulty I was able to make out what it was. 'Now I am a Gandhi-girl. I am supplying shoes to all Gandhi-men in our town when they picket. If you were now with me! But the fellow whose shin you broke annoys me. I do not know what to do.' This was the text of it. I put the letter back into the purse and kept it safe in a hiding place.

Some days elapsed before I could find a companion from among the prisoners of my own type. The lad I came upon had a quiet glow about his face, and, as it seemed to me at the very first instance, possesed an alert brain and a quick heart. We got attached to each other very soon. This friendship proved a different kind. We spent much of our time together, discussing things on a level above the reach of average minds. I did not feel the deprivation of contraband things. I even felt joyous at the experience of this intellectual association. In spite of it all there was a feeling within me which indicated that a vague something eluded me that could not be made up for with any of the happiness derived from this intellectual companionship. Even the mute presence of that rustic cobbler had been giving me an inexplicable pleasure which I did not have now.

A month went by. My acquaintance and I were as usual at the bathing tank one morning.

' After all the fellow is recaptured, sir, some one gleefully informed me.

' Who? Marimuthu, you mean?'

' Yes, the very fellow.'

' Where is he—in the Quarantine or come in?'

' Come in. Under lock and key in a single cell where red caps are usually kept.'

Without saying a word to anybody I hastened towards the particular row of single cells intended for red caps, followed by my friend in amazement.

I spotted out the cell. The moment Marimuthu saw me, he rose and leapt forward violently as if he were bent upon breaking asunder the iron door. But the next moment he stepped back with an embarrassment about his face as it were at the sight of something abominable, and his eyes gazed blankly behind

me. I turned my look towards where his eyes seemed riveted, and saw there none else besides my companion. The suppressed emotions within the breast of that motionless figure were visible to my searching eyes.

'What the devil does it all mean?' exclaimed Marimuthu, recovering from the confusion. 'You fool! You too are here! I thought you so—a cutthroat; I thought you would prove some day. But your shin is turned all right; yet they hunt and harass me like mad.'

'The days are changed, and an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is not to be,' I mumbled to myself mechanically though not understanding what it all meant.

'I joined the movement,' muttered the friend behind me, irrelevantly, 'and they have brought me here.'

'You joined the movement and became a Gandhi-man to get a pair of slippers from a girl who belonged to somebody else,' roared Marimuthu. 'Then the movement be blowed, and Gandhi—no, he is a great man.'

I did not know what to say.

'Marimuthu,' I called out.

'We shall meet some other time, Master,' abruptly said he, the rudeness of his tone shocking me.

I left the place.

After a while, I was joined by my new friend in my cell.

Seeing a revulsion in my attitude towards him, he tried to explain the whole thing to me.

'Gopu, you are mistaken. Allow me a word in explanation. I tell you that fellow is under a misapprehension about me.'

'What is that? Come to the point,' I growled.

'He is very much enamoured of that girl, who is after all not so much of a witch, I assure you. It is all due to a mistake. And that girl, I tell you, is of a mischievous sort. She is desirous of possessing things which she could not even dream of getting in this life of hers. He is very much infatuated with her and the law seems to be very often intervening in the manifestations of that love. He assaults somebody for her sake; he scales the walls of a prison for the sake of her; he is caught because of her refusal to seek a hiding place; in all likelihood he will be going on doing things to please her, which also may turn out something cognizable in a court of law—'

'But the explanation?'

Although I grew impatient over his roundabout way of saying the thing, I percieved yet a ring of sincerity in his tone.

'Yes, it is this', he began. 'You know I am no exception to the crime of absentmindedness in intellectuals. I am a chauffeur by calling, which fact I have been concealing from you because of my fear that you would avoid mistaking me for a non-intellectual. I had to resort to that vocation, failing to secure something better. Once I had parked my Master's car somewhere. This ubiquitous girl seems to have had got into it out of inquisitiveness and without my knowledge. Imagining her to be my Master, because of my absent-mindedness, I jumped into the car and drove it off. The carburetter was somewhat out of order and making such hell of a noise that I could not hear the scream of the girl before I drove a considerable distance. I knew my mistake when it was too late. She was fretting and fuming. I tried to pacify her and promised to drive her back to her place. She was so enraged that she was not amenable to reason. She scolded me in the way an uncultured brute would do. Only when she attributed motives, I could not brook it and caring not a pin for her went to the place my boss was. The very next day I met this rustic cobbler. He took me unawares and assaulted me ferociously. My left shin got broken. Everybody was convinced of my innocence, and the fellow was convicted. So that's that.'

He finished. With a silent nod of my head, I asked, 'But what do you say to this ?' and handed him the little scroll I found in the purse.

At first he could not understand me.

I told him the story of the purse and the scroll.

He tried to read it ; and then he burst into laughter, saying : 'Oh, the girl thinks too much of her beauty ! She began helping the movement, and I joined the movement. Along with others I went to her for a pair of shoes. She refused me. I didn't care. I never went to her again. Many a time had I met her on the roadside, and she seems to be under the delusion that all my activities centre round her. Absurd ! I don't know where it all will end. But the law is there.'

Yes ; the law is there as it ever will be, and the girl also is there. But where will Marimuthu be ? I can't say ; for that matter nobody can say.

I shall hear under the wintry sky
The cold wind wailing disconsolate through the trees,
And when glad spring returns with flower and song
Scattering wild blossoms upon the dust,
Even from my grave I'll long for the *Chameli*
Blooming in the liquid evening dark,
And the *Bakul* dying silently to death through all the night.—

HUMAYUN KABIR
(*Poems*)

THE PITY OF IT

By M. G. NILAKANTAN

MEENAKSHI AMMAL was a broadminded woman. She believed indeed that to be a Bramin was identical with expecting unquestioning service from the rest, that the woman's world was the kitchen, that fasts and prayers and charities made religion, that everyone at least under thirty was a child to be overfed and over-nursed and never for a moment to be left alone. She accepted and respected all these accepted and respected dogmas and superstitions and several others, both major and minor. But that does not prevent her from being regarded as broad-minded. If she limited woman's domain to the kitchen, she was not a protagonist of gossip and scandal-mongering; if she thought too much of Brahmins, she tried her best to be one, according to her light and faith, if she talked too much of God and Heaven, there were also moments in her life when she thought about them, and when she came near knowing her God and passing the door of His Heaven.

Largely thus she was a product of her environments. But she had a sense of humour and a sense of proportion. Neither able to read much, as she was, nor at all taught anything, these came to her rescue and helped her, along with her shrewd commonsense, to see through the hard and binding littlenesses of her creed farther beyond into the broader and better principles of her religion. Consequently, side by side with a scrupulous observance of all the narrower restrictions of Brahminism, her life was a programme of the practical realisation of the broad teachings of Hinduism—a fact, which it need be hardly said, rendered her immensely popular with one and all. When at eighteen she found a child in her arms, and herself a widow, she had felt that she *must* revolt. But the idea of re-marriage was as much in advance of her, as she was with her idea of revolt, in advance of her times. So she marked time and matured into a disciplined wisdom and a subdued never-failing cheerfulness, until before long, if she was not original, she was as different as possible from the typical Brahmin widow of a fairly long standing—with the suggestiveness of desires unfulfilled, life unenjoyed, sorrow ununderstood, spite and spleen accumulated, scandal-mongering made an occupation of, a sickening squeamishness substituted for true modesty which is naturally absent—as different as possible from the typical Brahmin widow leading a life not altogether out of her own choice, of huge, hollow, re-sounding humbug.

She was also very rich. This of course, helped her a long way in being different. For, besides the independence it gave her of other people, wealth has a largeness of mind, which can with some effort be converted into breadth of it, and tolerance and fellow-feeling and sympathy as distinct from sentimentality.

Thus, it is only to be expected that her son Gopalan had a perfect, almost an ideal, bringing-up. Nor was it unnatural that he should be a little vain. But his vanity was not happily of that kind which sets itself above all else, but that pleasing well-nigh shy variety which shows just enough of itself when it very well might, and only helps to endear the subject all the more.

Gopu had his playmates. It was a curious group—the daring and adventurous Gopu always commanding, at times haughty; the laughing mischievous Vasu who shut up like an oyster in cold reserve at the approach of a stranger; and his sister Devaki, a plump, bewitching rogue of a girl. What a perfect little idyll were their days! Sweetness and peace and happiness and more happiness! Ever and anon, Meenakshi would watch the children at

their play, now swelling with pride at her own dear boy's domineering ways, now looking far, far away with her thoughtful eyes, misty and filling with unshed tears. Was she asking herself if such happiness could last for ever? Could it—oh, could it?

Vasu and Devaki, by the way, were orphans in a Nair family. Their uncle was well enough disposed towards them and normally affectionate. He let them have their own way and would have let them more. But their aunt—and report said she counted for more—was a 'woman of the world' and minced no words about it: and the uncle rested content with being passively affectionate as he had some taste and some respect for decent quiet. The children therefore, often found themselves in Gopu's house and called his mother theirs—and found her more a mother than theirs would probably have been.

Let us skip some years which the children spent at school. Schooldays are best loved sometime after they are finally over. Except for the keen rivalry between the boys and many schoolboy-exploits only of interest to them, except for the prizes they won and the names they fashioned for themselves, only of interest largely to their mother, little stands out that is of interest to us, detached spectators, but that they had come out of the mill, the finished products of a system which goes on for ever.

Let us also just strike one note; it might prove important. The children had been brought up to be frank ever, true ever to themselves. The boys especially were clever; they read widely and they thought for themselves. The bond between them daily strengthened and at the same time the gulf between them and their mother widened. The goddess of their younger days had slowly descended from her pedestal as it became painfully apparent that Mother had her weak points and that several of her notions were old-fangled. But Mother was still the affectionate mother of old; and with all their boyish frankness and the courage of youth's convictions, they had the decency or was it half cowardice—to respect Mother as of old and keep away from certain topics in her presence.

A few weeks later, the boys decided to finish their education in England. Vasu's aunt through his uncle, conveyed her firm and final veto. In the enthusiasm of youth, that it often mistakes for heroism, Gopu too gave up the idea but was soon persuaded (a little too soon, perhaps) by his companion to reconsider the matter. Meenakshi Ammal demurred at first; but her broad-mindedness ultimately carried the day—and Gopu was to go. When at the railway station the friends made big asses of themselves and couldn't find two words to talk to each other; when they finally shook hands and waved handkerchiefs and with queer smiles beheld each other through two columns of water; and when finally having made sure that each was out of the other's sight both burst into tears before coming to themselves—could you not forgive them for their weakness of the moment?

Of the letters they wrote to each other—with which they deluged each other—we shall say little more than that if Mr Micawber had entered the competition, he would have been nowhere. When two young people are separated by a long distance after having lived one life for the first twenty years of their lives, they are bound to write a great deal of sense—and a greater deal of nonsense. Years later, when they happen to read their letters over again, (if they have been preserved) they are torn between the overpowering sense of shame compelling them to thrust them into the fire and the sense of cowardly pride still holding their hands. The two youngsters left no topic under the sun undiscussed. Now they were vehement, now they quarrelled, now they were sentimental, now lachrymose. Gopu defended the use of meat and wine in moderation; Vasu stoutly attacked it. Both, the creatures of circumstances, each made necessity his virtue. Vasu was god-fearing and piously inclined; he had lived some years under Meenakshi Ammal. Gopu wanted a change and he

felt independent. 'It is far harder, my fine fellow,' he wrote, 'to firmly deny, by conviction, any accepted doctrine than to accept it yourself'—and so he decided to call himself an atheist. 'It is difficult enough to believe in God; it is much harder to deny Him'—he wrote in bravado; and little knowing what he did but hugely proud of it, he professed atheism and feared God in his heart as much as any other man.

Well, well, but to attack the vanity of youth is cynical; it shows an utter lack of understanding of human nature. Here were the two youngsters, just like many of their age; very vain, terribly sincere, often hoodwinked by themselves, very serious, very wise, of course radical, unthinkably self-controlled, quite selfless, perfectly generous, and rather jealous of each other.

Those were not days when Indian students went to foreign universities by the shipload. But all who did go, while they were worshipped as supermen on their return, had to suffer while abroad, from the bitterest calumnies about their morality. The idea obviously is that a boy's sole aim in going all the way is to flirt with a few ungraceful girls, and that such a procedure is not possible in his own country. Some believe that they can keep their boys out of harm's way by getting them married early enough; to them, probably, a married man's morals are beyond reproach.

Thus it was that Gopu too came in for his share of back-biting at home. To this, at first, Meenakshi turned a deaf ear, of course; but little drops of water can wear away a stone. Let scandal be the drops of water, and be they ever so little, they will surely not take long to wear away the hardest stone, the strongest unbelief. And take it from me, the nearer relative of yours is the man attacked, the harder it is for you not to believe in his guilt.

On Vasu therefore devolved the duty of comforting and reassuring their mother. He bungled and gulped down and omitted whole pages of Gopu's letters in his hopeless inability to explain to his mother the learned discussions that were there; and there were some moments when Meenakshi herself grew suspicious seeing Vasu turn page after page and end tamely, 'That is all.'

But we are going too far away from the story. Nobody, we are sure, would be surprised to hear that his studies completed, Gopu took a high degree in law, was admitted into one of the Temples, and coming home was straightaway appointed as a Magistrate.

Little of the story has been told so far; and little more remains—it is a short story. And the little is the common factor of most stories—an affair of the heart. If you had noticed the reunion of the old group you would have stumbled against a new element. You would have found it difficult to understand why two old playmates should blush on their meeting after a few years' separation; why they should find so little to ask and tell each other, and why one should withdraw with a wholly needless show of haste. But soon you would have nodded wisely and said, 'Oh, the fools are in love!' Yes, the fools were in love—poor fools!

Gopu was an impulsive fellow and his resolve was to follow each impulse to its end. And when on his home-coming he found Devaki—the plump, bewitching girl of old—grown into just a fascinating fairy, he had an impulse and both of them were sure that from that moment each entirely belonged to the other.

That was Gopu's first impulse and he resolved to follow it to the end.

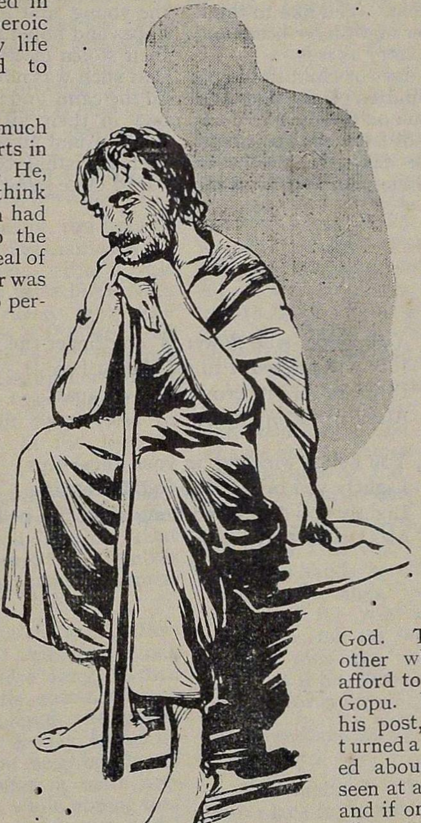
We have been looking on Nature as creative only—and as perfect in the art. The idea that destruction is also within her in her normal cycle is one which does not occur naturally to us. Such is the fact, nevertheless. Or why should such a perfectly natural event as a boy and a girl who had known each other all their lives beginning to love each other, help such a storm to brew and bring desolation into the hearts of a whole close-knit group?

Before mentioning the matter to his mother, Gopu had left wholly out of

consideration such a thing as her will. With all her breadth of mind and vision, she found her son's proposition too preposterous to visualise. After all her arguments (mighty poor ones, I am afraid) and the last and strongest—that of tears—had been tried in vain, she said in heroic despair: 'Not in my life then,' and hastened to reach its end.

We shall not say much of Vasu's frantic efforts in converting his mother. He, himself, had had to think twice, and even then had sacrificed his views to the needs of the nobler ideal of friendship. His mother was inflexible. He tried to persuade his uncle, but that gentleman was for a policy of *laissez faire*. Vasu faced his aunt and bore her taunts like a man. We shall not speak much of his attempts at persuading his mother and dearest Devaki's aunt; of the tears the poor girl shed before both; of the calm strength of principle with which Meenakshi stood firm on the one hand and of the malicious relentlessness, with which the Amazon of an aunt stood firm on the other; of the countless opportunities which gossips had been afforded; or of the countless stories they spread. Of these and other matters pertaining to this story, much need not and shall not be said. Suffice it to say that all could see the beginning of the end.

I do not pretend to know if grief can cause death; or if grief had anything or everything to do with the case in question. All I can vouch for is that one gloomy morning Meenakshi Ammal refused to get up from her bed and was found to be deep in her last sleep. You might be tempted to call it an irony of fate by which that evening Devaki was married to a gentleman of her aunt's choice. And not long after, you could see a pale, half-sleepy girl looking about as if for her wits. Of Vasu's whereabouts, nothing is yet known. The last report made is by a neighbour who says that on the evening of his sister's marriage Vasu was heard to curse in no weak terms the two greatest objects of his fear—his aunt and his God. There is still another whom we cannot afford to lose sight of—Gopu. He—he resigned his post, grew a beard, turned a sage and wandered about; he was to be seen at all sorts of places, and if one were to believe all reports, at several places at the same time.



'He resigned his post, grew a beard, turned a sage and wandered about.'

If it had been given to them in their childhood to see into their future, to exchange the experiences of childhood for those of manhood, would they have welcomed a darker and drearier childhood, smudged with more tears?

You think perhaps of 'the pity of it' all; and how greatly a little turn in the

tide would have altered the march of events. You like, perhaps, to think of Gopu as a Judge or a Collector, living an idyll with his Devaki and his mother in the mellow evening of her life, and with his trusted lieutenant Vasu, that little Major Dobbin. You like to think of these and other night-have-beens and quarrel with the story as it is.

I dwell on the days of childish happiness when the children played and their mother looked on; on the days of comradeship at school and all the bright sunshine of those days; on the hopes and ambitions of the youths and on the zeal with which they discussed the future of their country and the way they were going to shape it; on their little quarrels and their makings-up; on their true strong friendship they most felt when apart; on the passages of love between the young and bashful pair; on their hopes and hopefulness; on the bliss of their stolen meetings when they forgot that such was not to be their share; on all the calm and intense happiness they had in their all too short lives—and finally I find myself facing a wanderer with a bristling beard and burning eyes—and close mine!

You held a wild-flower in your finger-tips
Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,
Idly you tore its crimson leaves apart . . .
Alas! it was my heart.

You held a wine-cup in your finger-tips
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,
Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl . . .
Alas! it was my soul.—

SAROJINI NAIDU
(*The Broken Wing*)

IN GOD'S OWN SANCTUARY

By N. V. BHASKARAN

WHO has not heard of Alanghat ?

In the twenties of the last century, a scaffold stood on the summit of one of its many hillocks and criminals sentenced to death were brought here for execution. But the scaffold is now gone and, by the side of the hill, dwells old Antony with his widowed daughter. Go a little further, and you can see the College spires rise in the horizon.

Alanghat has not many residents to boast of. When the College is closed for Christmas or for Onam, it is a vast desolation. Even the little birds seem to leave it. Not far away from the College grounds, there is a dilapidated mansion on the top of a dry hill and along its waist, a streamlet winds its way to further north. Legend goes that the mansion was built by a band of nomadic white men in the time of Tippoo.

It has been my practice to wander among these hills and woodlands when freed from a classroom oration. But could I ever imagine that these rambles had in store for me the greatest surprise in my life ?

I remember, it was a Saturday afternoon. As usual, I careered along Antony's Hill and before long, reached a small temple with its entrance opening out to me. I entered the sacred precincts and, to my dismay, found no living being in the neighbourhood. Never was God's habitation more neglected. I stayed for a while hoping that some pious devotee would come and I could enter into conversation with him about the temple and its history. None turned up, and as it was past six in the evening, I thought I would better return to the Hostel with its rush and bustle. The Hostel with its rush and bustle! The thought thrilled me for a moment and from this I was awakened by somebody touching me on the shoulder. I turned suddenly, and beheld the stooping figure of a man with his white beard flowing down his breast. Whence he came is a puzzle to me even to this day. We stood there face to face for a while. Then I saw the thin arm of the stranger rise in the air and waving me to be begone. Next the arm fell to rise again more threateningly. I was undecided. To obey or not to obey was the question. The priest was imperious and his countenance was forbidding. But I was loath to let go an opportunity of knowing something about the place. These priests are an incorrigible lot. They will have their way. The golden mean I knew was to cater to his vanity. Vanity! The priest is not exempt from it ; nor the philosopher.

I stooped down on my knees and prostrated before the God's own man and said in a low reverential tone, known only to temple attendants : 'I am a devotee of the Great Rama ; I crave for your blessing.'

'You have it, my son,' he spoke at the top of his voice and once again raised his hands, now to bless me. 'You have my blessings,' he said, 'but it is dangerous for you, stripling, to loiter here for a minute more. I warn you for your own sake.' And he raised his head, as if he were satisfied with his own performance.

I bowed and asked, 'Good sir, what's the matter ?'

'The matter ? The matter is this. This place is haunted by devils. There have been fires in the thickets, and thunder in the skies. I have seen figures moving about with flaming torches shooting out of their heads. Those who came here for worship have fled in terror. And I alone do homage to the Great One.'

I stood silent for a minute, not knowing what to do. I folded my arms, and looking in the way of the temple, asked

the strange old priest, 'Why does not God intervene ?'

The answer came readily. 'Foolish child, God knows everything. It was only yesterday that I had a dream and I saw Sri Rama fighting the devils single-handed. It occurred to me in my dream that the devils had crossed the underworld in search of the fallen wing of Jatayu. For, it was here that the wing of Jatayu fell after it was severed from his body by the Rakshasa king, Ravana. The spirit of Ravana knows that it was the wing of Jatayu that helped Rama to find out Sita's whereabouts and destroy Lanka. Ravana from the underworld has summoned his retinue and they now haunt this place and destroy whatever they can lay hands on. Now, begone, my boy, and stay not a moment more in this horrible place.'

The whole story struck me dumb. Rama, Ravana, Jatayu—names to conjure with ! I bowed again and hurried away. I did not know whither I was going. Stories about devils and such other inhabitants of the spirit-world were not new to me. For often in my childhood, I have heard my mother narrate, one by one, strange tales about the dwellers of the dark world, how they accost wayfarers and when they are off their guard strangle them to death, or how they lure children into lakes or rivers by holding flowers before them. Of all these tales, that about my grandfather preyed upon my mind. I had often thought that these were concocted by interested parties, but I could not question the veractity of the strange old Brahmin, with no worldly interest, as I first fancied.

Wearily I plodded on, and had not gone many a yard when to my greatest surprise and relief whom should I see but Ramu, the adventurer, emerge from a dense thicket. Evidently, he had watched every one of my movements.

When he was just by my side, he asked me with bated breath:—

'Bal, you had been to the temple ? '

'Yes.'

'Did you see the priest ?'

'Yes.'

'What did he tell you ?'

'He bade me be begone.'

'Nothing else ?'

'He told me that the place was haunted ;' and I repeated the priest's story.

'Bal,' said Ramu, when I had finished, 'I do not believe a syllable of what he says. I came here yesterday and he met me near the temple-gate and related to me the same strange story of the devils.' Then after a brief pause, Ramu continued, 'To-day, I am determined to watch him, no matter if it costs me my life.'

'Ramu, then you are going to stay ?' I inquired rather anxiously.

'Yes,' he responded sharply.

I did not know what to say. In the end, I made up my mind to stay with him and see if anything happened in the night.

From our hiding place, we could see that the priest had disappeared. But before long night would envelope everything in its dark mystery and the temple would be lost to our sight.

We lay in concealment for over an hour. As each moment slipped by, my heart beat the quicker. Then the temple bells came reverberating in my ears. 'If the priest's words are true !' I pondered.

Here Ramu touched my shoulder and said, 'Follow me ; we would go a little nearer to the temple. We can't see anything from here.' I obeyed unhesitatingly. We were soon within a few yards of the mysterious abode of God.

Just then an owl screeched from a palm tree near by.

Another hour passed. Ramu grew restless. He moved on to the temple and I followed him like his own shadow. Then as we stood by the temple-gate, he said, 'We must get in, Bal.' In a moment, we clambered up the low walls and hid ourselves behind a thicket of tulsis and roses. Only a single light

glimmered by the side of the idol. Mute little thing! It did not seem to know what atrocities were being committed before its presence.

We were wildly looking about, when we heard the approach of footsteps. There was the priest with a flaming torch in his hand. He was followed by four or five stout men who were naked save for the loin cloths. The priest put out the torch as soon as he entered the sanctuary. He sat cross-legged on the *mandapam* opposite the idol and then beckoned the others to his side. And then we heard him ask in his hoarse imperious manner, 'Now, is it all settled?

'Settled?' cried out one of his associates, 'the devil denies having any treasure.'

'Oh, damn the rascal. Bring him here.'

Scarcely had the words died out on the priest's lips, when two of his comrades disappeared through the narrow doorway at the back of the temple and soon came back accompanied by an old wretched-looking man with hands tied together and eyes blindfolded. When they reached the august presence of the priest, the latter demanded of the captive, 'Where's your treasure?'

At this the poor man shrieked and began to pour a volley of curse upon the priest. 'The treasure, you rascal? And it is for this you decoyed me here?'

'Then you take this,'—the priest could not finish it, for he felt the firm grip of somebody on his shoulder. In the excitement caused by the victim's refusal to disclose the much-dreamed-of treasure, the villians could hardly be aware of the presence of the policemen. As we understood later, the policemen had been watching the movements of the priest and his companions and had made no mistake about their trade.

The presence of the policemen emboldened us to rise from our place of hiding. We had not much difficulty in impressing upon them that it was only curiosity that led us to this strange place, for they had watched us also from the tops of some palm trees in the neighbourhood.

At dead of night, we entered the hostel that slumbered after a week's work.

SORROW has a pouch of musk in its bosom. If only you know how to get at it, it has a life-giving value, a spiritualising message. Sorrow crushes the juice of life only to make wine of grapes . . . Sorrow is God's own splendid and special gift to man, and man's own gift to man.—

K. S. VENKATARAMANI
(*On the Sand-dunes*)

HER 'HINDU' MOTHER

By AUNDY

I.

IT was the sixth month after the death, under suspicious circumstances, of the widow's only daughter. Circumstantial evidence had enabled her to locate the culprit. But as he proved to be the paramour of his abettor, her mother, she had not the courage to proceed against them according to law.

To sue for one's civil rights from a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a wife or even a husband has never been uncommon in India. The archives of the temples of justice all over this vast continent would have been empty of half their present contents, if there had been no such convention. In fact, the Hindu Law, *in its present form*, is nothing if it be not such an explosive mine shattering every conceivable human bond to pieces! But a straightforward and open criminal action under the Indian Penal Code against a murderer-relative has been an exception rather than the rule; for the 'Hindu' social sentiment abhors the unveiling of its myth of family system before a judicial tribunal.

The unfortunate young widow, therefore, had to take the line of least resistance by quitting her maternal household in disgust and taking up her abode with my wife, Dr Sarada, in the latter's new residence at Trivandrum.

Time had soothed the agonies of her widowhood. It had healed the anguish of her unfulfilled marital life. Monastic singleness too had become almost her second nature, its reaction having prompted her a couple of months back even to accuse my Sarada of sexomania in having rejected her first husband and married me in defiance of law and convention. She had known Fate as having been cruel to other widows like her from the beginning of the world. She had witnessed deaths in the past, seen many of children too; at every such instance sorrow had subsided with the passage of Time. But never, never, in all course of history—not even in any of the bloody western tragedies she had read at college—had a mother been a party to such a foul crime against her own progeny!

And that mother, the adored source of her being, the guardian of her upbringing from infancy to marriage, the consoler once of the sorrows of her widowhood, the beloved partner of her honourable and honoured father, the model, as she had thought, of monasticism and self-sacrifice—who could have ever dreamt that such a lady would belie all the above characteristics and sell herself, like the notorious Queen of Denmark, to that Mephistophilean Don Juan, that 'remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain,' full fifteen years younger than herself—I mean my friend M—?

And, again, how he was let loose against herself too, and how she had a narrow escape from the incestuous beast—oh! these thoughts, coupled with the more horrible hallucinations and haunting visions of her dead child yearning for vengeance, were moving within the young widow's mind in quick cinematographic succession!

Yes, she was refusing to be consoled. Sarada's attempts in that direction only aggravated the poignancy of her grief. But when I and Sarada proposed, after much persuasive eloquence, a temporary shift to Madras, she hesitatingly fell in with the view and followed us.

Our stay in the city lasted but for a couple of months. The trial of Kamala, the Daughter India, who had shot my Sarada's first husband dead to make way for her re-marriage with me, suddenly ended in a fiasco, thanks

to the subterranean manipulations of my father-in-law, Collector Viswanatha Sarma. The rich man's judiciary yielded thus to the 'heaven-born's' solicitations and the accused was, of course, discharged for want of external evidence against her—beyond her own open and repeated avowals of her guilt! Sarada and I were puzzled at the turn of events, while the accused herself was the first to break the spell by her clarion-cry: '*Justice is a Myth!*' A conviction would have easily secured for her the martyrdom which she had longed for. This discharge, on the other hand, upset all her calculations by focussing public attention on the loopholes of the Indian Penal Code. The accused's father, the shrewd Vakil, Erachikulam Mr Torchlight Subramania Iyer, produced a medical certificate and took her to his native city of Trivandrum for treatment of melancholia. Suppression of justice is ever dangerous to all—the victim, the society, and the criminal too!

Kamala's discharge had an indirect re-action on our own guest, the bereaved widow. In spite of the best attentions of Sarada and her father, there was no abatement of her sorrow. Her newly-learnt lesson of the myth of Justice aggravated her despondency, and the good collector had, therefore, an uphill task to persuade her to go back to Trivandrum to claim at least her financial dues from her mother and brother, who had, by this time, returned from abroad. This did not appeal to the widow at first, but on second thought she agreed to the proposal as it would, without being unconventional, provide her with sufficient funds for post-mortem charitable endowments in her dear daughter's name.

II

Yes, it was exactly six months, then, after her daughter's demise. We had all returned to Trivandrum but a week prior to that date. Notices and counter-notices by emergency mails had been flying from each to the other, between the widow and her mother. Friends, relatives, arbitrators, lawyers, witnesses, agents, touts and other carnivorous birds of prey were swarming above, each ever ready to pounce upon the 'flesh' and 'blood' that might be scattered from the combatants of this impending domestic fight.

Sarada and I were speculating in my room on the future of Kamala. We had fixed up a joint visit to that lady that afternoon. Our guest too had promised to accompany us. She was lying on her camp-cot in her own apartment, brooding over her mother's latest registered notice to her alleging an intimacy between her and me, when the door opened admitting her England-returned younger brother.

'Oh, come in, Chandra,' greeted the widow. 'Be seated.'

'No, I've come to take you home, replied the young man in plus-fours. 'Let us talk about everything, there. Come on! We can send for your effects later on.' And he pulled his sister by the arm in fraternal familiarity.

'No, no, Chandra!' remonstrated the lady disengaging herself from her brother's grasp. 'It's no place for our father's children.'

'Don't call me by my old name, please. It has a disagreeably lunar or lunatic association of ideas. I'm Chand now.'

'But to me you are ever my Chandran.'

'You can't take that liberty with me and yet remain in another's household.'

'Having lost mine, any place is as good as any other.'

'A mother's place is God's place. "God cannot be everywhere and so He created mothers."'

'God *is* everywhere—except in a mother's heart.'

'Quite an unfilial remark.'

'This unmaternal notice here,' retorted the widow, producing a typed sheet from the table, 'could not have ema-

nated from where godliness is. It alleges an intimacy between me and Pichai!'

'What about your allegations against her?'

'I never alleged anything. I only demanded my money.'

'Your money? No Hindu widow is entitled to any money from her brother or mother. And you, a renegade!'

'Shut up, fellow! I claim not maintenance, but that which I had lent you for your costly education abroad.'

'It was mother who lent me and not you.'

'Whose money?'

'I didn't care to know it nor *do* I.'

'And what about my jewels and my daughter's?'

'I am instructing the Police to come and take possession of those jewels which *you* had stolen from the house when you left it.'

'Stolen?'

'When a sister brings shame upon her mother and her brother, they must defend themselves.'

'When the mother herself brings it?'

'You shouldn't have left the house.'

'—and escaped from the drunken beast's overtures?'

'There comes your allegation!'

'To whom else am I to prefer my grievances, boy?' cried the poor widow in despair.

'You persisted in getting a pro-note from me and mother, didn't you?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'To safeguard my daughter's money.'

'Now that she is no more, why shouldn't you give it up?'

'And for me?'

'You are but a childless widow.'

'And so *you* can plunder me, is that so?'

'We have a moral claim upon your money.'

'Immoral claim, villain!' retorted the lady.

III

At this stage, her weeping mother and my friend, M-- entered, followed by a Superintendent of Police in uniform and the inevitable Vakil, Erachikulam Torchlight Subramania Iyer. The presence of the police officer and the mischievous Vakil suggested to us that something serious was going to happen. Calling up, therefore, my father over the phone and requesting him to hurry up urgently, we joined the visitors in the widow's apartment.

Our entry synchronised with a general cry from without and we looked out of the window. A huge multitude was assembled at our door, hooting a constable who was attempting to prevent their entry into the house. The scheming matron's demonstrative lamentations all the way from her house to the D. S. P's and thence to ours had evidently roused the curiosity of the street-loafers and urchins.

'We beg pardon, madam,' began the D. S. P., apologetically, 'for our abrupt entry.'

'Is it an official one?' inquired Sarada.

'Oh, no, no! Quite an informal visit.

'That uniform of yours misleads everybody,' said I.

'Excuse me.' And he removed his turban and placed it on the table. 'I was ready for my Office when they dragged me here. Having served under this young lady's father and borne her on these shoulders of mine years ago, I am called upon to persuade her to go back to her mother.'

'In that case,' replied Sarada, 'you are welcome—all of you. I too have phoned up to my father-in-law, Rao Bahadur Natesa Sastri, Retired Dewan Peishkar, to hurry up here.'

'Well done! I've served under him too. He may help us with his valuable suggestions.'

'Be you seated then—all of you!' And I brought in four more chairs from my room for the visitors. Sarada sat beside her friend, the widow, in the same sofa, while I sat on the window-sill to have the pleasure of observing the movements of the multitude below.

'Now,' began Sarada, 'what is it that you want?'

'I want—my dear—daughter back,' sobbed the mother.

'What for? Is she a property or a minor?'

'Why should a daughter stay away from her mother?'

'Why should she stay with her?'

'That's her proper place.'

'Is that the *law*?'

'It's the Hindu *convention*.'

'The 'Hindu' convention and Law,' interposed the widow, 'enjoin a widow to live in her husband's household, but you are calling me up to yours. The 'Hindu' convention prohibits a sea-voyage, but you used my daughters's money and jewels for sending your son abroad, instead of celebrating her marriage at the right age. You, a 'Hindu' widow, have been allowing this young man here—a renegade from his wife and children—to be an inmate of your house for a number of years in the teeth of opposition and scandal. Is that 'Hindu' *convention*? And yet, you have the cheek to talk of it to us!'

'Do you insinuate, madam,' replied the erstwhile silent Vakil, 'anything unholy against a matron of forty-five?'

'If unconventionality implies unholiness also.'

'No respect for her age?'

'Why are you, sir, in search of a third wife, now in your sixtieth year?' I said smiling.

'How do you know?' bungled the Vakil.

'Shall I produce your own letter?' I threatened.

'But my sex is different from hers,' he began to argue.

'A sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander as well.'

'Age, sir,' supplemented Sarada, 'is no criterion in these matters. I, as a medical woman, can assure you that forty-five is far below the marginal age for supersexuality.'

The above interesting discussion was abruptly interrupted by the entry of my father and Dewan Bahadur Law Vengu Iyengar, ex-Law Member of Madras, followed by my father's cook, Subbarayan Poti.

The two distinguished visitors were greeted by all of us standing, my friend M—and the Vakil vacating their respective chairs for accommodating them. The D. S. P. mechanically put on his turban and cut a police salute. Chandran had, by that time, discreetly trampled under foot the last remnant of his cigar and he, his sister, his mother, Mr Iyer and M—simultaneously saluted the legal luminary of Madras in right Indian fashion. The latter responded individually to everyone of them and turned to me and Sarada, smiling. We too returned the smile with a joint bow.

My father naturally acted the host and requested everyone of us to be seated. M—and the Vakil moved up to the camp-cot, while I went back to the windowsill. My father's chatty cook, having placed on the table the ex-Law Member's silver pan-casket before him, slipped himself by my side and began scratching my toe inquisitively.

IV

My father, an M.A., and an M.L., of the University of Madras, had begun his official career as a District Munsiff in Travancore. But as his academic successes had prematurely run far ahead of his judicial mentality, the shrewd Maharajah of the State converted him into a Tahsildar in 1907. Subscribing liberally for the war-loan in 1915 and forcing many ryots in his jurisdiction

to do likewise, my parent bought the title of Rao Bahadur and became a Dewan Peishkar on the repeated personal recommendations of the then Political Agent to the Maharajah. Since his retirement in 1926, he has been 'studying' our 'hoary' religion at the feet of local astrologers and purohits and 'living up to it' intermittently with card-play and coffee in their company. But since my return to Trivandrum with my Sarada, he too had shifted there, but to a separate house, apparently for a change, but really to guard me, as he himself said, from further 'quixotic adventures' in the field of Marriage Reform.

Dewan Bahadur Law Vengu Iyengar, on the other hand, had ever been an astute lawyer, though only a B.A., B.L. A conservative individualist by temperament, a Varnasramite Sanatani by party label, a loyalist by profession, a cosmopolitan at the Viceregal dinner-tables, on ovaltine-cum-fruitarian by necessity, but by conviction none, he served his self most faithfully, rising up to the Law Membership of this province. Ever since his retirement he had grown more philanthropic, for he had resumed chamber-practice in the name of his clientless dummy son-in-law advocate and for the benefit of his 'poor daughters' who stood to inherit his own vast assets! Bereft of all his teeth he still retained the faculty of devouring —not his mortar-pounded pan, nut, and tobacco dust—but all that came in his way in the shape of jewels and cash belonging to helpless widows and voiceless orphans.

'I was about to go out,' began my father, 'with my distinguished friend here who arrived this morning from Madras to book a local Oxonian for his grand-daughter, when I got your message. We naturally directed the car here. Well, any new adventure?'

'This young lady here,' replied the D. S. P., 'has left her household. Her mother is anxious to get her back. That young man there—a non-relation—seems to be an inmate of the household and that is said to be the reason for the lady's quitting the same.'

'Now that my friend, Mr Chand,' interposed M—, 'has come back, I offer to remove myself from the house immediately.'

'How could this be a police case then?' asked the ex-Law Member, putting a palmful of pan-dust into his vast oral cavity.

'It's not one,' answered the police officer. 'I am here but as a family friend. I had served under the young lady's father for a number of years.'

'Who was he?'

'The late C—.'

'Oh, my chum, client, and relation!' exclaimed the ex-Law Member. 'And don't you recognize me, madam?'

'I do,' replied the widow.

'It was I who got for her her vast properties from her husband's reversioners. Her father had specially requested me to treat her as my own daughter Muthoo. Well, I believe I have the honour to have before me the lady and her mother?'

'—and the son as well,' inserted Mr E. T. S. Iyer, shrewdly. 'He has just returned from England after his studies.'

'Oh, I see!' And the Dewan Bahadur looked at the brother with an appraising glance and inquired, as if casually, 'Is he married?'

'Not yet,' answered the mother.

'My friend C—belonged to the Kausika gotram—am I right?'

'Yes,' nodded the matron.

'I know it. He was a cognate of my uncle. Well, my daughter,' continued he, turning to the widow, 'now that the stranger has offered to go, what is it that prevents you from going back to your mother?'

'The whole issue, gentlemen,' replied the widow, 'has been twisted. My claims are not even mentioned.'

'What are they?'

'They have used for his education abroad my moneys to the value of thirty

thousands in cash and ten thousands in jewels. I want them back.'

'My good Lord!' burst out the mother. 'Her father left a lakh-and-a-half at the time of his death. Having squandered every pie of it in her extravagant tour through India and Ceylon, tying us down to a debt of fifty thousands, she yet puts forward against us a further claim of thirty thousands! To think of the monstrosity! And again the jewels — what a daring lie — especially after having sold away our family jewels openly at the bazaar on the eve of her flying away with her young man!'

'Her boxes here,' added the brother, 'may contain other jewels and silver vessels of ours.'

'Here is the plaint itself,' said Mr E. T. S. Iyer, producing a bundle of typed papers, 'which I have been asked to prepare. And here are the two remaining family jewels which we place in your neutral hands.'

'What are these for?' asked the ex-Law Member eyeing intently the sparkling diamonds and emeralds.

'For disposal to whomsoever they belong to, and for making her produce the family accounts, moneys, and jewels now in her possession.'

'I, an absentee daughter, to account for their family moneys and jewels?' asked the widow sarcastically. 'And not the local *matron of forty-five*?'

'Pleading absence as an excuse, girl?' interrogated the elderly lady. 'Here is her young man, gentlemen—her own nominee—whom she now deliberately accuses of unmentionable crimes, simply because he has refused to comply with her unholy——. Oh, it wounds my maternal heart to accuse the first offspring of my honoured husband!' She sobbed bitterly.

While in England,' supplemented the brother, 'I was the recipient of several letters about the scandal.'

'The scandal had no foundation at all—I mean that part of it which drags in my name,' defended M—. 'But the young lady used to tell me, during her monthly first-class trips from Madras to this place, that I must somehow manipulate to bring about the marriage of her daughter with her brother, and that she would then place her fifty thousands at my disposal for our joint tour round the world. It was a temptation indeed for anybody to succumb to and I was only human. But fortunately something happened to save me.'

'These gentlemen represent the pink of Hindu society,' said the mother wiping her tears, 'and I am sure they would be scandalised immeasurably to hear your story.'

'During her last visit to this city,' continued M—, 'I discovered that I had been forestalled.'

'He is hesitating to betray his friend,' said Mr Iyer, 'before his distinguished father and his newly married wife.'

'What! My son?' exclaimed my father.

'He? Ha, ha, ha!' Sarada burst into a sarcastic laughter.

'You were unconscious, madam,' added M—.

'Of what, sir?'

'Your were under, I say,' M—persisted.

'Under? What does that mean?'

'Under Bacchus!.'

'Under Bacchus! I?—I see.'

The constable, in his inquisitiveness to witness the scene within, had by this time, admitted into the adjoining drawing-room all the bullys and vagrants of the vociferous crowd.

'It has become my painful duty now,' began Sarada, 'to disclose here what I had thought to suppress.'

'Why not the other lady herself answer?' suggested Mr E. T. S. Iyer.

'Is this a test of forensic ability? Or histrionic capability?' I interposed.

'Why did *he* speak for *that* lady?' asked Sarada.

'He gave evidence; that's all,' replied Mr Iyer.

'Why not I?'

'But why do you volunteer?'

Your witness having 'voluntarily' rescued me from '*under Bacchus*' I am compelled to volunteer payment for the same.'

'Go on, madam,' ruled the Dewan Bahadur putting another palmful of pounded pan into his month.

'I have known this young lady,' declared Sarada, 'for several years at Madras. The story of her monthly first-class trips is a myth. Her hostel attendance register would prove the lie.'

'During vacations, too?' interupted the Vakil.

'Vacations do not come *monthly*, sir! Nevertheless, I and my father can swear to her being an inmate of our house during all vacations except one.'

'Proceed,' ordered the impatient ex-Law Member looking at his gold pocket-watch.

'I had the misfortune to first suspect foul play in the death of the little girl, and the King Institute confirmed my suspicions.'

'Which girl?' inquired the Dewan Bahadur.

'Her daughter.'

'Is she dead?'

'Yes, by blood poisoning.'

'And so she is childless now?'

'Yes. And thirdly, I and my husband and this young lady had the ill-luck to witness with our own eyes a scene, which does little credit to us, Brahmins —least of all to 'Hindu' womanhood.'

'What was it?' asked my father, evidently getting more interested by this time.

'On the eve of her daughter's demise, I was urgently phoned to hurry up to examine her ailing girl. As it was an unseasonable hour, I took your son too with me. This young lady was waiting at the gate and we went up to the patient's room by the staircase. Having discovered that her heart had expanded enormously and with a view to report the matter to the elderly lady downstairs, we knocked at the drawing-room door which led to her bed-room within. The door was opened after a few minutes. Your son entered in a perturbed state of mind and inadvertently upset a glass object, which immediately broke with a clank. This focussed our attention on the table on which were standing a bottle of whisky and a wine-glass. This old matron hastily removed them to the cupboard, saying that it was her tonic for rheumatism! My friend having collapsed at this new surprise, I led her towards the bed-room to deposit her in a bed, while your son rushed up to its door and threw it open for us. And lo! what should we see there but this young witness of theirs standing with a lighted cigarrette in his mouth! My friend swooned away at the sight, while this 'matron of forty-five' and this young man here stalked out of the room defiantly and vanished.'

'A decadent dramatist's warped imagination,' remarked the Vakil, 'has failed to concoct a more probable story.

'As if a sex-intoxicated sexagenarian Vakil's alone,' I retorted, 'is straight enough to espouse the cause of a matron of forty-five!

'Well, madam,' began the Dewan Bahadur, addressing the young widow, 'what evidence have you regarding your claims?"

'I had a couple of pro-notes,' said my friend, 'and half-a-dozen receipts with me, but they have stolen them. I have with me, therefore, only letters to prove the existence of the above records.'

'Can you prove that the jewels were yours?'

'Yes, by witnesses.'

'That means years of litigation, worry, and expense.'

'Claims generally are so.'

'Granting your whole claim is allowed, how much will you be able to get from their assets ?'

'At least half.'

'How much will be left for them ?'

'None.'

'And for their maintenance ?'.

An England-returned young bachelor and his 'Hindu' mother can never be destitute nowadays !'

'Now, madam,' and the toothless old Lawyer turned to the mother, 'if your claim is allowed, how much will you get ?'

'Thirty thousands.'

'How much will be left for her ?'

'As a mother, I'll have to maintain her.'

'There spoke the true Hindu *mother* !' exclaimed Mr Iyer.

'Now, ladies and gentlemen,' began the retired Law Member, sitting erect in his presidential chair, 'from what I have so far heard from both the parties, I find that each party will be ruining the other in reputation and fortune if the matter is taken to a court of law. A lot of stinking linen too will be washed. Whatever be the merits of the claims of either side, we, as leaders of the Hindu society, ought to see primarily the interest of the family as a unit. The right hand should not be allowed to take vengeance on the left, nor the left cut away the right. If that which is left of the properties of each party be added to the other, it may come to a substantial sum, respectable enough for the maintenance of all the three surviving members of my late lamented friend C—'s family. What I, therefore, would suggest is—and I hope my friends, Mr Sastri and the D. S. P. will also agree with me—that the mother, the son, and the daughter must live together as a joint family, that the daughter be given the management of the estates of both the parties, none of them, however, having the power to alienate the same, and that the son's issues must inherit the properties after the death of all the three. And, again, it shall not be possible for any of the three to introduce a stranger into the family without the approval of the others.'

'Most sensible decision !' exclaimed my father.

'Both equitable and just,' added the D. S. P.

'And one that relieves the mother's young man and the daughter's young man of their respective scandalous offices !' This only witty remark of my father's during his whole lifetime provoked immediately a loud roar of laughter and applause from the crowd assembled in the drawing room.

'That means,' cried the widow rising up, 'that means that half of my present wealth too should go as fees for them for their benign 'Hindu' act of murdering my only daughter, that I should lose even my present absolute right over my inherited properties as well, as a penalty for my crime of lending them money !'

'No, no,' retorted the brother. 'It's but a reward for your devouring all the plums of our father's wealth, leaving us but sucked oranges !'

The crowd outside shouted a second jeer.

'I have awarded, my dear daughter,' replied the Dewan Bahadur, 'what appeared to me equitable. I didn't choose to go into the merits of your mutual allegations in *your* own interests. You allege all the five deadly sins of Hindu criminology against your mother. The Hindu world will value a mother's bonafides more than a childless widowed daughter's.'

'Is it my fault, sir, that I am a daughter widowed and made childless ?'

'Nor is it ours,' answered the brother.

'It *is*,' declared the widow, 'and *that* is my main grievance.'

'Shame !' cried a voice without.

'Shame on you !' shouted the widow in response. 'You rabble there, haven't you wives, sisters, and daughters ?

Would it take long for them to come to my state? Are your mothers—'Hindu' mothers—licensed to go astray?'

The crowd hooted again.

'You dogs! You stones!' roared the widow in indignation and despair. 'You abettors of adultery and murder! These jeers and hoots that you shriek against me now await your 'Hindu' society itself at the hands of other communities of the world! An innocent voiceless widow's curse will never be a cry in the wilderness!"

'Drive them out!' ordered the D.S.P. to the constable but himself went out to carry out his order.

"Would you have asked me, sir,' asked the young widow turning to the old Law Member, 'to share my wealth with my mother and family and leave my husband as well, if I had re-married?'

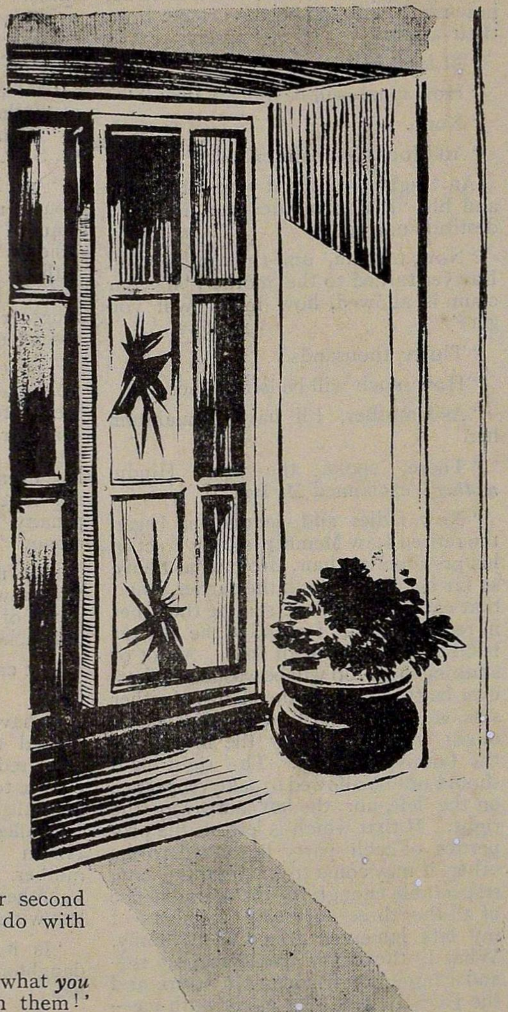
'Certainly not!' answered my father.

'And so this is a punishment for a widow's crime of conforming to 'Hindu' *convention* by not re-marrying?'

'Your properties, girl,' argued the matron of forty-five 'belonged to your first husband, and what have your second man and his children to do with them?'

'Certainly much more than what ***you*** and your son have to do with them!' retorted the daughter.

'With a view, madam,' apologised the Law Member, making himself ready to leave, 'to save you from litigation, loss of money, and reputation and in the interest of Hindu society, I suggested a middle course.'



'Yes, I've found it,' she exclaimed, half screaming, half groaning, 'the Hindu ***Mother****—our* ***Hindu*** *mother. Here it is! Yes, that from which our Hindu Gods are chiselled!'*

'You ought to have looked upon me, sir, as your daughter Muthoo and not as a mere member of the 'Hindu' society?'

'It's getting late for me, madam,' said the Dewan Bahadur, walking towards the door. 'I don't say my award is perfect. Each party may have to sacrifice something, as is usual in all compromises. I'm sorry, madam, that you are upset. Good night! Please do think over and, then, accept or reject what I have awarded.' And he walked out of the room, not forgetting to carefully pocket the jewels in his possession.

My father had to follow his distinquished guest and the vakil, M—— and the matron of forty-five stalked out of the room overjoyed at the success of their mission.

'We shall meet in court soon, foolish woman!' cried the brother as he rose to go.

'And in hell, too, ungrateful wretch!' exclaimed the sister, bursting into tears.

But the England-returned brat had vanished before she could finish her sentence.

My father's cook, who was lingering at the door in evident uneasiness, was suddenly called away by the sound of the motor horn.

The D. S. P's voice rang from without ordering a general dispersal to the crowd. The sound of horses' hooves told me that the mother's party too were departing in their jutkas.

I peeped out of the window a minute later and caught a glimpse of the disappearing visitors. But the crowd, which was waiting without, seeing my head, shouted: 'Seducer!'

I smiled and turned away, closing the window after me when, suddenly, a heavy object from without struck the the glass panes and smashed them to pieces.

The astonished widow ran up to see what it was when another struck her forehead.

'Appah!' cried she, placing her hands over her forehead, and a stream of red blood began to flow out of her temple.

Sarada rushed up to her for first aid, while the wounded widow picked up the granite stone from the floor and, placing it on the table, exclaimed, half-screaming, half-groaning:—

'Yes, I've found *it*!—the Hindu *Mother*—our *Hindu* Mother!—Here it is!—Yes, that from which our Hindu gods are chiselled!'

'Hinduism is a myth, dear girl!' shouted a familiar voice and Kamala appeared at the door. 'Justice is a myth! Everything is myth!'

But Kamala was mad.

A man's worth must be measured
by his faculty for admiration.—

ERNEST RENAN

ONE NEVER KNOWS

By PRABHAKAR

'MUNI, Muni,' burst forth his wife. 'Get up, you lazy bones, pull off that rug. Don't you hear the cock!' Muni rolled from side to side and drew the rug closer. 'Dear! Dear! What a heavy slumber!' cried his wife exasperated.

The history of Proddatur is interesting. It was born as a village, passed through gradually into a small town. The rural calm was completely replaced by the urban hoots of the automobiles. The rich had the benefit out of the change, the poor had the worst. There lived a middle-aged labourer Munisawmy who had been a contemporary of the growth of the village. His lot was bad when Proddatur was a village, and it was worse when Proddatur became a town. Muni lived a hand-to-mouth and toiled all through the day for his food. A streak of chance would fetch him work for weeks at a stretch, and then would begin the evil day—half-starving till another happy dawn. His earnings for the day were so meagre that the next day had to take care of itself. Chance and circumstance ruled his miserable life.

Munisawmy could not find work the previous day. But towards the evening he had a bit of luck. A rich retired Tahsildar was celebrating the marriage of his only daughter on a grand scale. There was a long pompous bridal procession in the night and Munisawmy's services were required along with many others to carry gaslights to illumine the bridal procession. Till midnight the merry procession went on, and then came back Muni to his hut, tired and yawning to lay himself down for a refreshing sleep.

Scarcely had he closed his eyes when his wife began to nag him. The hard reality of life shook all drowsiness from his head. The January morning so densely foggy bode a gloomy prospect for the day for him. There was yet no twilight and it was too cold for one to get up early.

Muni emerged from his small hut shivering, to seek work for the day. A smile lit his pitiable face as he recollected the words of the Tahsildar: 'Come tomorrow, I shall find some work for you.' It was already a bit late and he hurried towards the Tahsildar's house.

The heavy fog made it difficult to guess the time. The roads were barely lighted up. A woman in front of him was leading a naked urchin by the hand. The naughty kid would not walk with his mother but frolick across the road. Suddenly there was the hoot of a motorhorn and Muni saw the imp right in front of the car. With an impulse he sprang forth and pulled the little beggar out of the danger zone. The young fellow began to yell now that he had been pulled across roughly. The stupid mother who was all fondness for her child gave full play to her abusive tongue. The fuss drew a crowd, and when the good-hearted Muni tried to explain the incident to the inquiring crowd, the wailing of the boy and the torrential abuses of the mother took the upper hand. Every one turned an unconvinced eye at Muni.

Muni plodded along with depressed feelings. The world seemed to be at enmity with him. He wondered why good intentions should bring trouble and pain in their train. He thought of going home as the incident had so sickened his heart. However, bracing up, he reached the Tahsildar's house and, alas, the master had left the house a fraction of an hour back. Nobody in the house cared to employ him for the day. 'Too bad, too bad, my lot,' he muttered to himself and turned back. On the way,

he came across a building under construction. The hands were busy. He approached the contractor and said, 'Pray sir, find some work for me.' The contractor hailed the head-mason and the head-mason counted the hands and promptly replied, 'Just one absent, sir.' 'Well it is already pretty late. Just wait for sometime; let me see if that bloke is going to turn up,' said the contractor in a dignified manner. Muni was anxious every moment to fall to work, during the painful waiting. The happy summons came from the contractor, ween lo! the other fellow sprang up from somewhere with apologies and explanations for being late. Wretchedness be cursed.

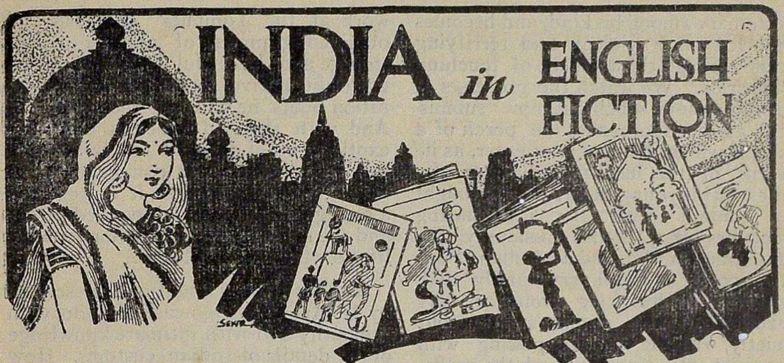
The little chance of gettting work was off, and Muni stopped in the market to find some random odd job. Somebody called out to him, 'Hey! look here, what do you want to carry this basket home?' The basket was heavy and Muni without asking him how far his house was from there, was ready with the answer, 'Anything you please, Master.' Two other coolies gathered round the basket and before Muni could lift it on to his head one of them struck a bargain for an anna as wages and was already on his feet with the load on his head. Muni was too soft-hearted to kick up a row with him. Besides it was no use. Misfortune surely did go a degree beyond limit that day for Muni. The Fates appeared to have conspired against his poor dejected soul. With the incubus of all these sore and successive disappointments on him he tramped along the streets. He looked a heap of misery and the cruellest thing was there seemed to be no way out of it.

It was well-nigh evening as he turned homewards, certain of a starving night. 'Hullo, Muni!' somebody greeted him. 'That was indeed good pluck; I would have sure run over that urchin and there would have been much trouble from the police. Master is delighted, now that the bother is averted,' continued the chauffeur of the wealthy Tahsildar. 'Come along, boy, Master wants to see you.' Both were at the Tahsildar's house. The driver told the Master that Muni was waiting and was vociferous about his pluck. Master came out with a happy and generous face and put a five-rupee note in Muni's hands, saying: 'Here, poor chap, this is for your pluck. Have a good day.' The blessing and the present from the kind old gentleman were too much of an antithesis for Muni. He was struck dumb and with great difficulty could find words to thank the kind-hearted old Tahsildar.

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world.—

BROWNING

INDIA in ENGLISH FICTION



He, BAKHA THE HARIJAN* 'didn't like his home, his street, his town, because he had been to work at the Tommies' barracks and obtained glimpses of another world, strange and beautiful . . . it represented a change from the old ossified order and the stagnating conventions of the life to which he was born.'

THE Indian problems are so many and so complex that a book dealing with a realistic representation of these, while failing to stir the imagination of the average Englishman in his country stuns his compatriot who, for all his long stay here, is 'perplexed in the extreme.' However, there are some discerning people and sympathetic in England; Mr Mulk Raj Anand's novel has drawn them out; we reproduce below what two of them have said about the book to offer a contrast of types in literary evaluation.

'It was worth while for Mr Forster'—so Mr R.A. Scott-James, editor of the *London Mercury* in that journal—'to write a Preface to this singular book by a high-caste Indian; for knowing India, having taste in literature, and being artistically incorruptible Mr Forster is a welcome intermediary between ourselves and an author whose work might easily have escaped attention. The novel affords a rare example of the manner in which material that lends itself to propaganda can be so treated as to produce the pure effect of art. It achieves with no appearance of effort the end proper to fiction; in simply telling its story and drawing its picture it moves us as no didactic work could do.

The action takes place within the compass of a single day. It is presented to us alternately through the eyes of the narrator, describing the scene and the appearance and movements of the hero, and through the latter's consciousness, as he reacts to the events of a day of tragic significance. It starts with the waking in the early morning of Bakha, a youth of eighteen, an "untouchable," in the squalid mud hut in the colony where the outcasts live. We are quickly made aware of his unusual vitality, zest, and sensitiveness, as he throws himself into his tasks—the filthy work of a scavenger—with irrepressible energy. The nobility of the character of the youth contrasts with the ignobility of his position among the untouchables. He is industrious but eager for pleasure and experience, though restricted at every turn by enforced habitual subservience to superiors who insult or patronize.

He goes into the city seeking adventure; wearing the smile of humility

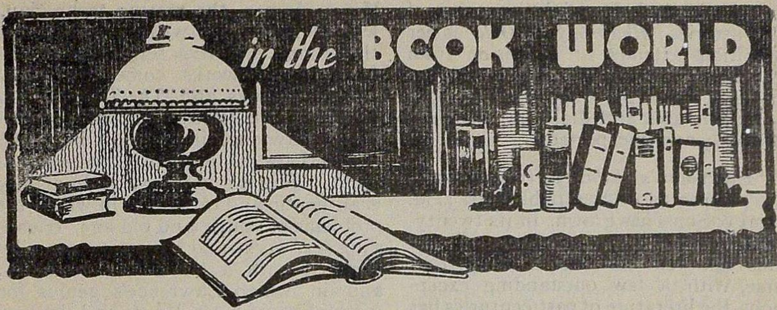
* *Untouchable.* A Novel. By Mulk Raj Anand. With a Preface by E. M. Forster Wishart, 7*s.* 6*d.*

customary among his kind, and becomes involved in a violent and terrifying scene through the accident of touching a superior. We watch the processes of his mind, now rebellious, now submissive, as he approaches the porch of a temple which he may not enter, as he learns of the insulting advances of a priest to his young sister, and is brought in contact with the illuminating doctrines of an English missionary, the Mahatma Gandhi, and an Indian Positivist poet. It is all very frankly told, without any shrinking from the ugly realities of the outcast's life, but quietly, without violence, passing with exquisite movement through the gradations of feeling which the Indian day evokes. The art of telling is such that whilst we are taken to the inside of an Indian mind, we do not feel it to have an alien strangeness—the strangeness lies in the conditions which govern its action, cramping it here, expanding it there.'

And the *Times Literary Supplement* critic :—

'Those who have felt some interest in the Indian untouchables as a result of Mr Gandhi's campaign on their behalf, but who have little knowledge of how those people live, will do well to read this book. It is a novel describing a day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper who started to clean latrines at the age of six, resigned himself to the heriditary and almost inescapable life of that craft, but as a result of watching soldiers in barracks, had dreamed of becoming a Sahib. "He didn't like his home, his street, his town, because he had been to work at the Tommies' barracks and obtained glimpses of another world, strange and beautiful ; he had grown out of his native shoes into the ammunition boots he had secured as a gift. And with this and other strange and exotic items of dress he had built up a new world which was commendable, if for nothing else, because it represented a change from the old ossified order and the stagnating conventions of the life to which he was born."

All that restless ambition is described by Mr Anand, a high-caste Hindu, with sympathy and with intimate knowledge of the details of Indian customs. How Bakha accidentally pollutes a caste Hindu, how a priest attempts to seduce Bakha's sister, how Bakha experiences kindness at the hands of a *havildar*, and the difficulty of getting food—all these incidents are depicted in good English and with considerable dramatic skill. Mr Anand is less successful in showing what methods of escape from a dreary calling and position of inferiority were offered to Bakha. He caricatures a Salvation Army officer, gives but a poor insight into Mr Gandhi's *harijan* campaign, and is slightly tedious in putting into the mouth of an educated Indian the advocacy of the flush system of sanitation as the solution of untouchability. But the fact that Mr Anand offers no satisfactory solution of India's greatest social problem does not detract from the merit of his story ; rather it adds to the tragedy, and emphasises that for Bakha—in spite of his longing to better himself—and for many millions of untouchables the tragedy must continue.'



ENGLISH

Doubtful Joy, by Elizabeth Jenkins (Gollancz, *7s. 6d.*)

Rhapsody in Gold, by Diana Maugham (Nicholson and Watson, *7s. 6d.*)

THE NEW "EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY" (Cloth *2s.* net each):—

The Turn of the Screw and *The Aspern Papers*, by Henry James

Stories, Essays, and Poems, by G. K. Chesterton

The White Peacock, by D. H. Lawrence

The Time Machine and *The Wheels of Chance*, by H. G. Wells

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, by George Meredith

The Country House, by John Galsworthy

LILY MACMILLAN is one of a charming social circle; she is well off to do as she likes or chooses and for her own pleasure teaches in a fashionable school in Kensington. 'She could say a pretty thing, in a cordial manner and with a sweet, bright smile, that kindled quite a glow in the other person. Perhaps it would not be fair to ask how far she meant what she said. In one thing at least she was sincere: she wanted people to be happy and at ease, so that nothing should destroy that pleasant atmosphere, out of which she drooped. Her arts of pleasing, her pretty airs of spontaniety and warmth, were all exerted to coax people out of fits of depression that were both disagreeable and tedious.' It is a matter of great pride to her to say that she has never been in love though it delights her to know that she is loved by some young man; she is wary and dissolves the relationship before it becomes serious. At twenty-four, however, she is changed thanks to a severe critical examination of her self; she sees her past as wretched, anæmic, and artificial and determines to begin all over again. Lionel Ackerly, a married man and in the Merchant Service, is her attraction and when at last she is sure of his love, she is sure also of the difficulties in the way. 'He's had a pretty good stretch of it with one woman,' says her brother Laurence to her. 'Do you think that if it came to the point he'd be anxious to try it with another?' 'He happens to want me,' she replies. 'Well, I dare say he does—now. But when you've become a drudge, and probably a nagger into the bargain, say in a couple of years' time, will he want you then?' That, indeed, is the problem and Miss Elizabeth Jenkins gives a solution of it by concentrating overmuch on the character of Lily MacMillan. An apter title than *Doubtful Joy* is not; it sums up the pre-eminent psychological interest of the novel and shines free the sincerity of the author.

Miss Diana Maugham, niece of Mr Somerset Maugham, the famous novel-

ist, storyist, and playwright is a writer of short stories; *Rhapsody in Gold* is her ambitious attempt at expansion from the short to the long. The novel has pattern and is pleasing with its tough-turned phrases and dialogue springing suddenly and unexpectedly.

'*Everyman's Library* (words from the prospectus of the publishers, J. M. Dent & Sons) has grown, in its twenty-eight years of life, to a stature of over nine hundred volumes. During that time, with a few outstanding exceptions, the literature of past centuries has provided the editor (Ernest Rhys) with all the material that was needed for the continual nourishment and development of the Library. But now there remain very few established and generally recognised literary masterpieces of the past that are not to be found amongst the nine hundred, and the time has come to choose from the labyrinth of contemporary letters those books which shall stand beside the older masters to represent the literary achievements of modern times.' Of the six authors chosen, two are living—G. K. Chesterton and H. G. Wells. Mr Chesterton's fiction is represented by four Father Brown stories and *The Sword of Wood*, his poems by *The Wild Knight* collection with the addition of the famous *Lepanto*, and his essays, nearly thirty, representing every phase of his thought. It is an early Wells and the two novels brought in one volume affirm his popularity as a novelist. Henry James, the master technician, who delighted in writing *contes* and those long, sensitive, self-revealing prefaces to his works comes with *The Aspern Papers* and *The Turn of the Screw*. '*The White Peacock* presents D. H. Lawrence in his most balanced, and perhaps his most sensitive, state of mind. Here is a novel whose humanity is authentic and revealing, in which the problems of youth and old age, friendship, sex, work, and ambition are illuminated with a marvellous freshness, and in which Lawrence's genius for description of birds, beasts and flowers, fields and woods, is seen at its best against the background of the midlands of England.' Meredith, master of the psychological novel, never in his later novels recaptured the energy and brilliance of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*; it made him famous, has long been established as his most popular work; the choice is commendable. *The Country House* introduces the mature Galsworthy; apart from his two Forsyte trilogies it is the most characteristic of his tales.

It is a fine selection; inclusion in *Everyman's Library* is immortality of the book, and the six volumes together are proof enough that the Library will continue its noble work of issuing more books which have brought something new into literature, have enriched contemporary life.

PEREGRINE PICKLE

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•

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